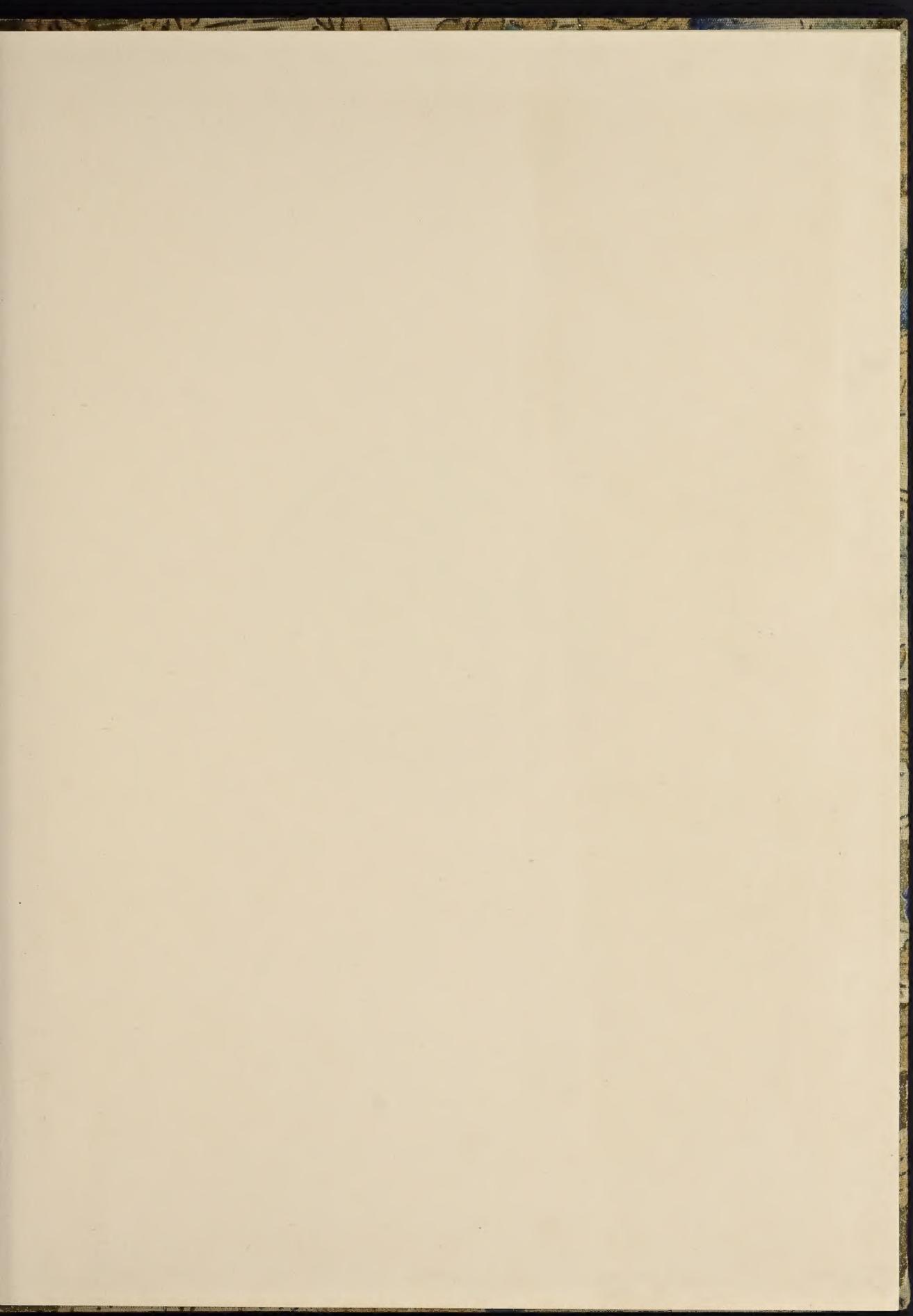


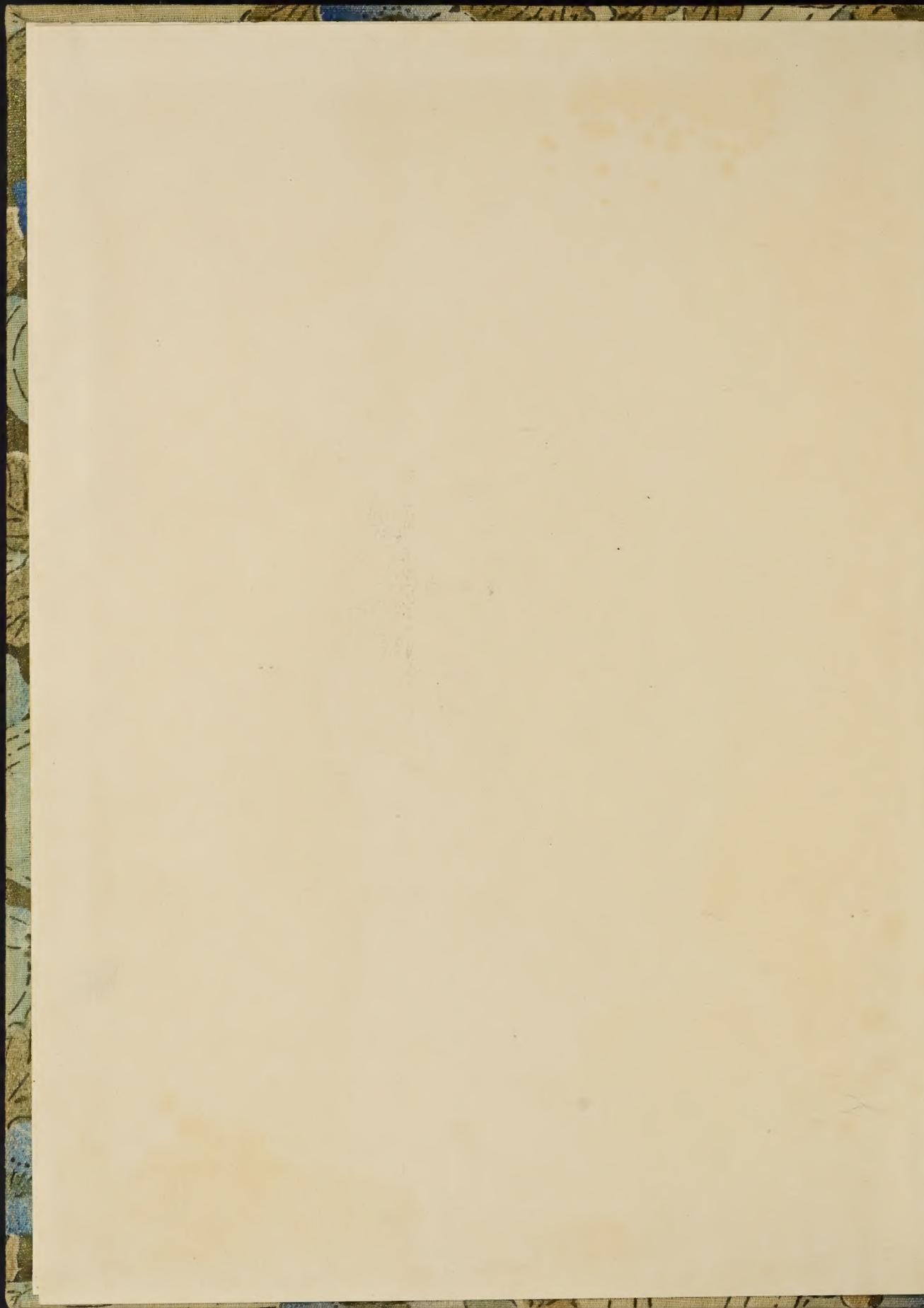


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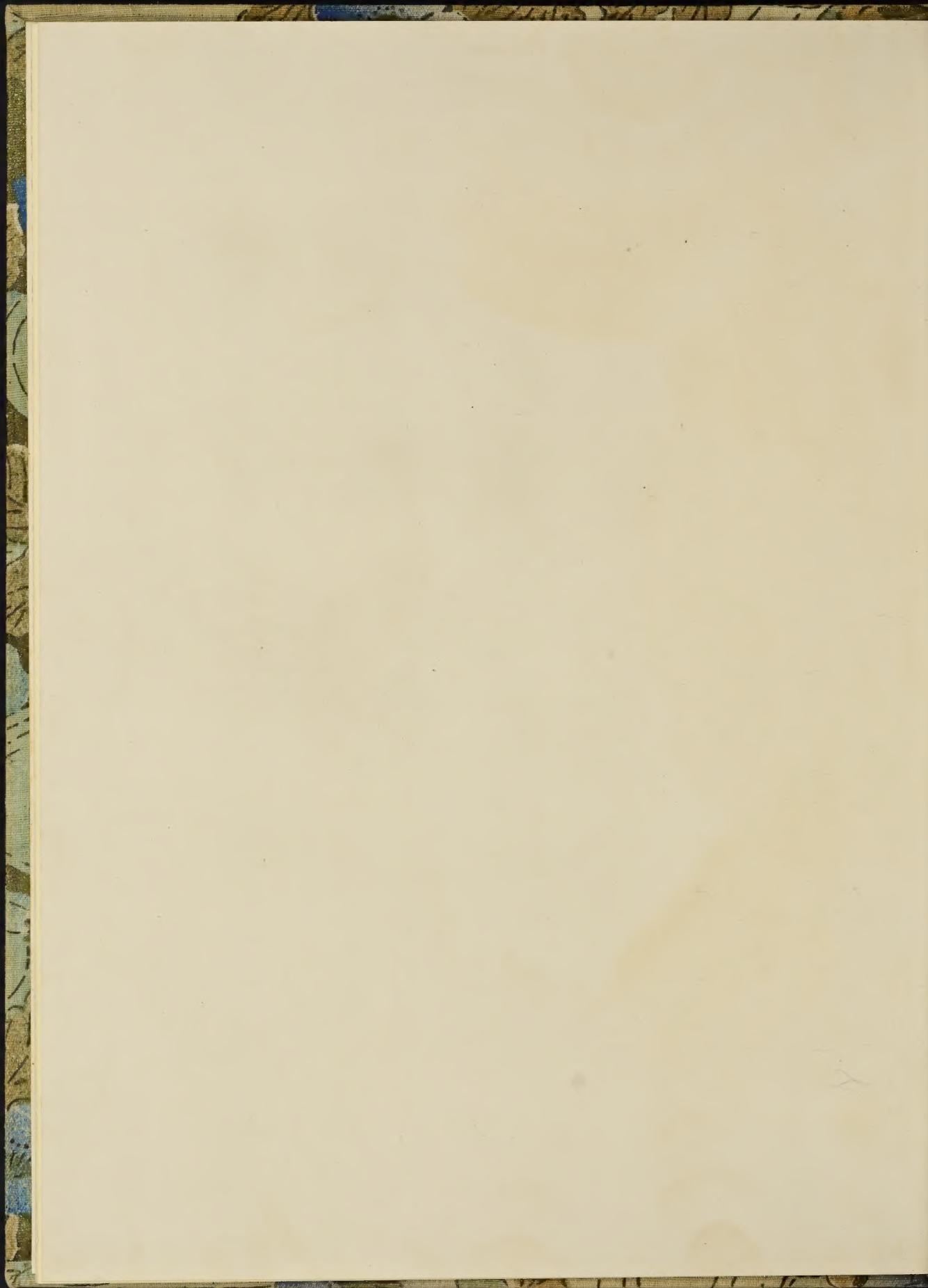


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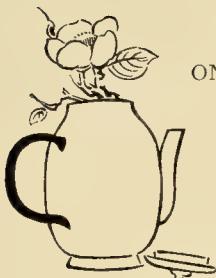




II.

THE EARLY JAPANESE AND THEIR HISTORY.

(Concluded.)



ONSIDERING this history of Jimmu's invasion in the context of our previous conclusions, we find that it involves nothing more than the hypothesis that there were two tides of Mongolian immigration, both supposed by Japanese annalists to be of heavenly *provenance*, and both derived by them from a common ancestor, the deity *Izanagi*. So, then, the record finally shapes itself into this: first, the *Koro-pok-guru*; secondly, the *Ainu*, both coming from the north, and the former driven completely out of Japan by the latter; thirdly, a Malayan immigration, via the South Sea islands to Kiushu; fourthly, a Mongoloid invasion from Korea by Matsushima and Akishima, or by Tsushima and Iki, to Izumo; and, fifthly, another Mongoloid invasion, coming over sea from some unidentified part of eastern Asia, touching at Kiushu, pushing thence eastward to Yamato, forming a pact with the Korean settlers, and amalgamating with the Malayan and treating the *Ainu* as savages to be exterminated rather than suffered.

It is a reasonable supposition that if an important section of the Mongol invaders reached Japan via Korea, some connection would have been subsequently preserved or renewed with the peninsula, since an easy route travelled in one direction offers itself always for passage in the other. Evidences of such connection are recorded in the most ancient annals, though their credibility is, for the most part, problematical. We are told, for example, that the Deity of Impulse crossed from Izumo to Korea; that the Emperor Jimmu's brother became king of one section of the peninsula; that a prince of the latter, with a considerable retinue, came to the court of Jimmu's ninth successor, sixty or seventy years before the Christian era, was instructed as to the name by which he should call his principality, and received a present which subsequently involved him in a quarrel with a neighboring State; and that an army was sent from Japan to his aid—the first Japanese military expedition abroad. But as all these things are supposed to have occurred more than four centuries before the art of writing was known in Japan, and seven before the compilation of the works in which they are recorded, the credence fairly attaching to them does not extend beyond an inference that occasional intercourse took place between Japan and Korea in prehistoric days, and upon the whole this seems quite probable.

That the reader may form some idea of the garb in which several of these ancient

traditions were dressed for presentation to the public in the pages of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon-gi*, it will be worth while to quote an incident ascribed to the time of the Emperor Sui-nin, who is said to have lived from 29 B. C. to 71 A. D.

The peninsula now known as Korea was in that age divided, if we may credit the annals, into three kingdoms, called by the Japanese of subsequent centuries Shinra or Shiragi, Kōrai or Koma, and Hyakusai or Kudara. In the early part of Sui-nin's reign, some twenty years before the Christian era, a prince of Shiragi, by name Ama-no-Hiboko, is alleged to have found his way to Japan and settled there. The romantic circumstances that led to this visit are described in the *Records of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*). In the land of Shiragi, we are told, a girl lay one summer's day sleeping by the margin of a lake. The sunlight, becoming enamored of her charms, shone like a rainbow into her bosom so that she conceived and brought forth a crimson jewel. A poor man, who had witnessed the phenomenon of the sun's amours, prayed her to bestow the jewel upon him, which, having obtained, he wrapped closely in his girdle. But one day, as he was leading an ox laden with provisions for the laborers in the rice fields, he encountered Prince Ama-no-Hiboko, who charged him with the design of killing and eating the ox. The poor man, to appease the other's displeasure, gave him the crimson jewel. This the prince carried home and placed beside his couch, where it was immediately transformed into a beautiful maiden, whom he took to be his wife. By her constant ministrations he lived in such luxury that at last he grew vain and despised her. Whereupon she told him that, he being no longer worthy of her, she should return to the land of her fathers; and forthwith, embarking secretly, she fled away to Japan. And he following her, his ship was beaten back and driven ashore at another part of the empire, where he landed and wedded the daughter of the lord of the place. There he begot a child, and there he kept the eight precious things which he had brought from Shiragi; namely, two strings of jewels, a wave-shaking scarf, a wave-cutting scarf, a wind-shaking scarf, a wind-cutting scarf, a mirror of the sea, and a mirror of the shore.



A JAPANESE WRESTLER.

The profession numbers about 350 men of great bulk. The champion wrestler is a popular idol.

The local coloring of this story seems to indicate a kernel of reality. If the political divisions of Korea were known to the Japanese in the first century after Christ, intercourse of some kind must assuredly have existed between the two countries. But did the knowledge belong to the men of that time, or to the writers of their history seven hundred years later; writers who had no certain means of distinguishing between their own information and the information of their ancestors thirty generations before?

Consider now another record of contact with Korea—a record that constitutes an article of implicit faith among the Japanese in general—and contrast it with the poetical allegory of the jewels, the mirror and the scarfs. The period assigned for the incident is about 200 A. D., when the Court of the Japanese rulers was temporarily in the island of Kiushu, or Tsukushi, as it was originally called. The Empress, so the story runs, had established relations with the gods, and from them learned of the existence of the land of Korea. It would seem that the divine revelation was in the nature of a commission of conquest. She urged her husband, Chu-ai, to essay the enterprise, but he apparently preferred the pleasures of ease to the glories of battle. It is a weird and curious tale. The Emperor, sitting one day in his garden, and ruminating, perhaps, on the toils he was about to undergo in a protracted raid against the aboriginal savages, played softly on his lute. Upon the Empress Jingo, listening to the sweet sounds, the spirit of divination descended, and she conveyed to her august spouse the counsel of the gods, saying: "In the West there is a land where the eye is dazzled by gold, silver and treasures of all sorts. Upon thee is this land bestowed." But the Emperor made answer that they were false deities who gave this mandate, seeing that, if a man ascended a high place and looked westward, his eye found no distant country, but only the wide sea. And, pushing away his lute, he sat silent. Then the deities were wroth, and a voice was heard saying: "It is not meet that thou shouldst rule over this empire. Turn therefore into the inevitable path." Whereat the Prime Minister, Takeuchi, cried: "An awesome message, my Heavenly Sovereign! Cease not to play upon thine



GEISHA PLAYING SAMISEN.

The samisen resembles a banjo, but the music evoked is very different in style. It was apparently introduced from Manila about A. D. 1700.

august lute." The Emperor, slowly drawing the lute to him, touched it with languid fingers. But, even as they listened, the notes became inaudible. And when they raised a light and looked upon the Emperor's face, he was dead. After this event renewed revelations were made to the Empress Jingo, and in consequence she equipped a powerful fleet and set sail for Korea, scattering wood-ashes, chop-sticks and leaf-platters upon the waves as she went. Landing on the coast of Shiragi, she penetrated into the interior of the country, and received the submission of its sovereign, who promised thenceforth to send tribute perpetually to Japan.

The truth of this conquest has been questioned by English sinologues, who point out a chronological error by which the birth of Jingo's husband is referred to a date thirty-six years after his reputed father's death. That there was such an empress as Jingo and that she ruled Japan with remarkable success, is apparently confirmed by Chinese records, which speak of Japan in the third century as the "Queen Country," and describe the death of an empress, seeming to correspond with Jingo, in 247 A. D. The balance of testimony, however, goes to show that no Japanese invasion of Korea took place during the reign of this empress, though Japanese antiquarians maintain the truth of the story, and assert that from the time of the expedition eighty ship loads of Korean produce were sent regularly every year from Shiragi to Japan.

Recently, too, the contention of these antiquarians has been strengthened by the testimony of scholars specially appointed, under the auspices of the Department of Education in Tokyo, for the purpose of making known their country's history at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. They rehabilitate Jingo's invasion in the most matter-of-fact terms, ascribing her warlike advice to a divine revelation that, as the rebellious autochthons of Kiushu against whom Japan's arms were then directed, habitually received support from Korea, the chastisement of the latter was essential to the complete subjugation of the former, and they gravely represent the death of her Imperial consort as a direct punishment inflicted by the deities because he refused to follow her counsels. They further allege that their ancestors learned to write at the beginning of the second century of the Christian era, that is to say, at about the time of Jingo's warlike doings, and they mention the names of two savants, Achiki and Wani, said to have been celebrated at that early epoch, who came to Japan, the former of his own choice, the latter by invitation, bringing with them copies of the Confucian Analects and of the Thousand Ideographs. Wani, we read, was appointed tutor to the Prince Imperial, son of the Emperor Ojin, who thus obtained a thorough knowledge of the Chinese classics. Yet, if we may credit the incidents recorded by these same historiographers, there is no reason why Japan should not have acquired the invaluable art of writing direct from China at a much earlier date, for they allege that in the century preceding the Christian era, or 250 years before the coming of Wani and Achiki, several Japanese subjects received official posts in the Court of an Emperor of the Han dynasty, and many Chinese scholars came to Kiushu through Korea, by way of Tsushima, Iki and Matsu-

ura. Such theories defy reconciliation by the light of any knowledge hitherto accessible. In truth, an exceptionally robust faculty for rationalizing myths and interpreting allegories is needed by any one seeking to read facts into the traditions of the earliest Japanese annalists. We shall scarcely be justified in indorsing any assumption based on the existence of intimate intercourse between Japan and her neighbors, Korea and China, prior, perhaps, to the fifth century of the Christian era, when it is pretty clearly established that the ideographic script of the Middle Kingdom began to be used in Japan, having already been used in China for many centuries, and in Korea for about six hundred years.

But whether we follow

Japanese annalists or accept the corrections of Occidental critics, the reader will at once perceive that, if the first tide of Mongolian emigration set from China towards Japan, the event must have taken place at least seventeen centuries before the Christian era; for though we may dismiss the legend that the diagrams of Fuh (3200 B. C.) or the tortoise-shell mottling of Tsang (2700 B. C.) was the hieroglyphic embryo of the ideograph, we are constrained to admit China's possession of some kind of calligraphy as far back as 1740 B. C., and it is inconceivable that emigrants from a land where such a faculty existed would have left the knowledge entirely behind them.

It is alleged that national annals began to be compiled in Japan at the commencement of the fifth century after Christ, but the fact has no practical interest, for the volumes were shortly afterwards destroyed by fire, and a similar fate befell a history said to have been written by the celebrated Prince Shotoku two hundred years later. The result was that the first books safely transmitted to posterity were the *Kojiki* (711 A. D.) and the *Nihon-gi* (720 A. D.). Already the Chinese sexagenary almanac was in use, as was also the system of year periods; two very defective methods of counting time, for in employing calendars based on a sexagenary cycle, errors of sixty or some multiple of sixty are always possible, and by such accidents Japan's earliest records are undoubtedly disfigured; while in reckoning by year periods that change not only with the accession of an Emperor, but also with the occurrence



GARDEN OF LORD HORITA IN TOKYO.

An excellent example of a Japanese garden.

of any memorable event, confusion was inevitable. Taking into account all these obstacles to historical accuracy, it becomes apparent that we need not seek to derive from Japan's early annals anything more than a general idea of the salient incidents that helped to shape the national character, and of the usages and customs that indicate its growth.

On the solid ground of written records, the first incidents that are encountered are persistent struggles between the Japanese proper—the relatives and followers of the Imperial family—and the aboriginal inhabitants of the islands. This contest involved the frequent despatch of armies to the extreme northern districts, and even of expeditions to Manchuria and Korea, whence the insurgents received succor. Not until the close of the eighth century was the sway of the Imperial Court, then ruling from Kyoto, fully established over the northern rebels, whose resistance had been protracted by their remoteness from the centre of operations and by the inaccessibility of the regions they occupied. Looking at the slow-witted, submissive and semi-savage *Ainu* of to-day, it is difficult to imagine them fighting such fights as are said to have marked their last struggles for independence, when they did not act merely on the defensive, but swept down in ships of war upon the coasts of the main island and raided the littoral provinces to far-inland points. The weapons used in these battles were iron swords of trenchant quality; spears of bamboo headed with copper or iron; bows and arrows tipped with stone or iron. There appears to have been no attempt to conciliate the northern rebels: their extermination was the object always kept in view. In Kiushu, however, and in the districts closer to the seat of government, where, it may be supposed, the Malayan immigrants were numerous, a gentler policy was pursued, and by degrees the distinction between these people and the ruling classes ceased to be a source of conflict. Naturally, when the business of fighting occupied so much public attention, the importance of military prowess became more and more accentuated. In the early centuries men took up arms if the occasion demanded such an effort, and laid them aside when the need was past. On every one alike the obligation of military service devolved, and the post of generalissimo was filled nominally if not really by the Emperor. But the necessity of guarding the northern and eastern marches against inroads by the insurgents induced the sovereign to delegate the supreme command in those districts to a *Shogun*, or general-in-chief, thus creating a power destined subsequently to usurp the whole administrative functions of the Empire. Already another germ of inevitable disorder existed in an arrangement by which the principal administrative offices were regarded as the property of special families; families whose origin, like that of the Emperor himself, could be traced back to the "age of the gods." Descending from father to son, as a matter of right, without any question about the capacity of their recipients, these posts sometimes chanced to be held by men of ability and ambition, sometimes by mere *fainéants*; the necessary result being mutual encroachments and resentments that defied the control of the Emperor himself and often encroached upon his prerogatives.

In truth, various and complicated as are the incidents that flash across the scene in the pageant of Japanese history, the background is always occupied by one uniform picture, a sovereign nominally sacrosanct and endowed by heaven with inviolable prerogatives, but at one time thrust almost completely into shadow by the aggressive ambition of his subjects; at another, drawn forth into the light by violent reactions of their loyalty.

When the Emperor Jimmu established his sovereignty in Yamato—an event which, for our immediate purpose, we may strip of its apocryphal aspect—he seems to have been accompanied by five chieftains to whom, in the hour of his success, he naturally delegated portions of his governing authority. It could not be expected that where the origin of the sovereign himself is obscured by clouds of myth and allegory, the genealogy of his subjects, however puissant they subsequently became, should be transmitted in clear terms to posterity. We can affirm little that is certain about the progenitors of these great families. So conspicuously did the importance of the offices intrusted to them transcend the personality of the individual, that each family became inscribed in the pages of history under the title of the administrative post conferred upon its founder. With regard to two of these families—afterwards known as the *Otomo* and the *Kume*—it is recorded that their ancestors were princes who held military command under the first Emperor, Jimmu, when he invaded Yamato, and we may reasonably predicate similar distinction in the case of the others, the *Nakatomi*, the *Imbe* and the *Mononobe*. At the outset, the influence wielded by the five appears to have been fairly balanced. Their principal members were appointed head men of the various administrative and religious departments, and these offices they handed down to their sons and their sons' sons. But before many centuries had elapsed, two of these five families had eclipsed the rest in power and importance, and there had grown up to an almost equal height of distinction a third, the *Soga*, founded by the minister who had acted as soothsayer and adviser to the Empress Jingo in her domestic and foreign campaigns. Yet a little, and one of the three virtually disappeared from the administrative scene. Its representatives



A JAPANESE TEA HOUSE.

families had eclipsed the rest in power and importance, and there had grown up to an almost equal height of distinction a third, the *Soga*, founded by the minister who had acted as soothsayer and adviser to the Empress Jingo in her domestic and foreign campaigns. Yet a little, and one of the three virtually disappeared from the administrative scene. Its representatives

had been so unfortunate as to be intrusted with the control of Korean affairs, and in proportion as they fruitlessly exhausted their resources in attempts to assert their country's supremacy in the neighboring peninsula, the consideration that they enjoyed at home waned and finally disappeared. The *Soga* and the *Mononobe* now confronted each other and struggled for administrative supremacy. It does not appear that at first they had recourse to the sword to distinguish the validity of their titles. The Emperor remained final arbiter, and to his decrees they bowed implicitly. But in the middle of the sixth century the situation was complicated by a new factor, the factor that in all ages and all lands has stirred human passions to their worst excesses of intolerant cruelty. Hitherto there had been only one form of religious cult in Japan. It was not, as has often been affirmed, the fetishism found among so many uncivilized peoples. It was rather polytheism, with considerable refinement in abstraction. The era of the personification of causes, though many traces of it still survived, had long given place to their deification, and in some cases not only had the personal qualities been eliminated, but the process of transforming causes into entities had commenced. The deities celestial having been the ancestors of the deities terrestrial from whom the Emperors directly derived their descent, ancestral worship was an essential part of the ritual, and as the sovereign was only one degree removed from the gods, the people held him sacred during his life, and paid the homage of incense and prayer at his tomb after death. He occupied in their minds the rank of an incarnate deity, and his commands received the reverence due to the mandates of heaven.

To a people educated in such a faith, Buddhism came from Korea in the sixth century. Its doctrines were wholly inconsistent with the maintenance of the old creed. They taught that Buddha was the supreme being; that the future of every man, Emperor or *Eta*, chieftain or churl, depended on his deeds in the present, and that one god, and one god only, claimed the worship of all humanity. Such a faith undermined the very foundations upon which the throne of the *Tenno*, the sons of heaven, stood. Had they been swayed solely by motives of selfish policy, they would have thrust out the propagandists of the foreign creed and devoted all their energies to rooting up any seed sown by them. But polytheism, by whatever human interests fortified, has never successfully withstood the onset of monotheism. The doctrines of Buddha prevailed, and the people of Japan saw the Emperor, who had hitherto been a high god in their eyes, bowing his head in homage to a being recognized as infinitely higher. Fate, the inviolable law of the universe, according to the new religion, now came upon the scene, and the sovereign himself was not exempt from its operation. Prominent men who opposed Buddhism met with violent deaths. Principal among them was the head of the *Mononobe* family, whereas the cause of the foreign faith was espoused with equal animation by the *Soga*. The Imperial family itself was drawn into these intrigues, which culminated in the assassination of the Emperor Susun (591 A. D.)—the only crime of its kind openly admitted by Japanese histories—and the accession of Suiko, the first female

that actually reigned with the title of Empress. The *Soga* family was now supreme. But that old malady, the delirium of success, worked its ruin. It is true that the assassination of Susun, which before the advent of Buddhism would scarcely have been possible, did not seriously shock the nation, for the greatest scholar and most revered philosopher of his time, — or, perhaps, of any time in Japan,— Prince Shotoku, found in Buddhist doctrines an explanation of the crime, and openly attributed the sovereign's death to some evil deed wrought by him in a previous state of existence. People were thus persuaded that the cycle of fate, not the political machinations of *Soga*-no-Umako, must be held responsible for the catastrophe. When, however, the *Soga* leaders, having caused the murder of two Imperial princes that stood between them and the consummation of their designs, would have procured the throne for a relative of their own, a counter-plot overthrew them and the *Soga* family fell from power. Japanese annalists, speaking of this event, employ the formula "the *Soga* family became extinct;" a euphemism signifying that every male bearing the name of *Soga*, graybeard, youth or child, was put to the sword. That was the method of dealing with such cases in ancient Japan, and it continued to be the method throughout mediæval, and even up to comparatively modern, times. Generally, through the devotion and bravery of a retainer, some scion escaped to resuscitate the fortunes of the fallen house in after years, or to restore to it a momentary *éclat* by some deed of fruitless valor. But for the time the family "became extinct."

Such a fate befell the *Soga* in the reign of the Empress Kokyoku (642–645 A. D.). They never again played any prominent part in the national arena. The chief instrument in their overthrow was Kamatari, representative of the *Nakatomi* family. Kamatari traced his descent to a comrade-in-arms of the Emperor Jimmu. The Japanese, in the seventh century of the Christian era, probably knew how to plant and trim a genealogical tree as deftly as any Debrett or Burke of modern Europe. Solutions of continuity in the parent stem were gravely bridged over by recourse to materials that transcended comprehension. Nine among



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF YOKOSUKA.

The Government Dockyard established here has within a few years transformed a prior village into a thriving town.

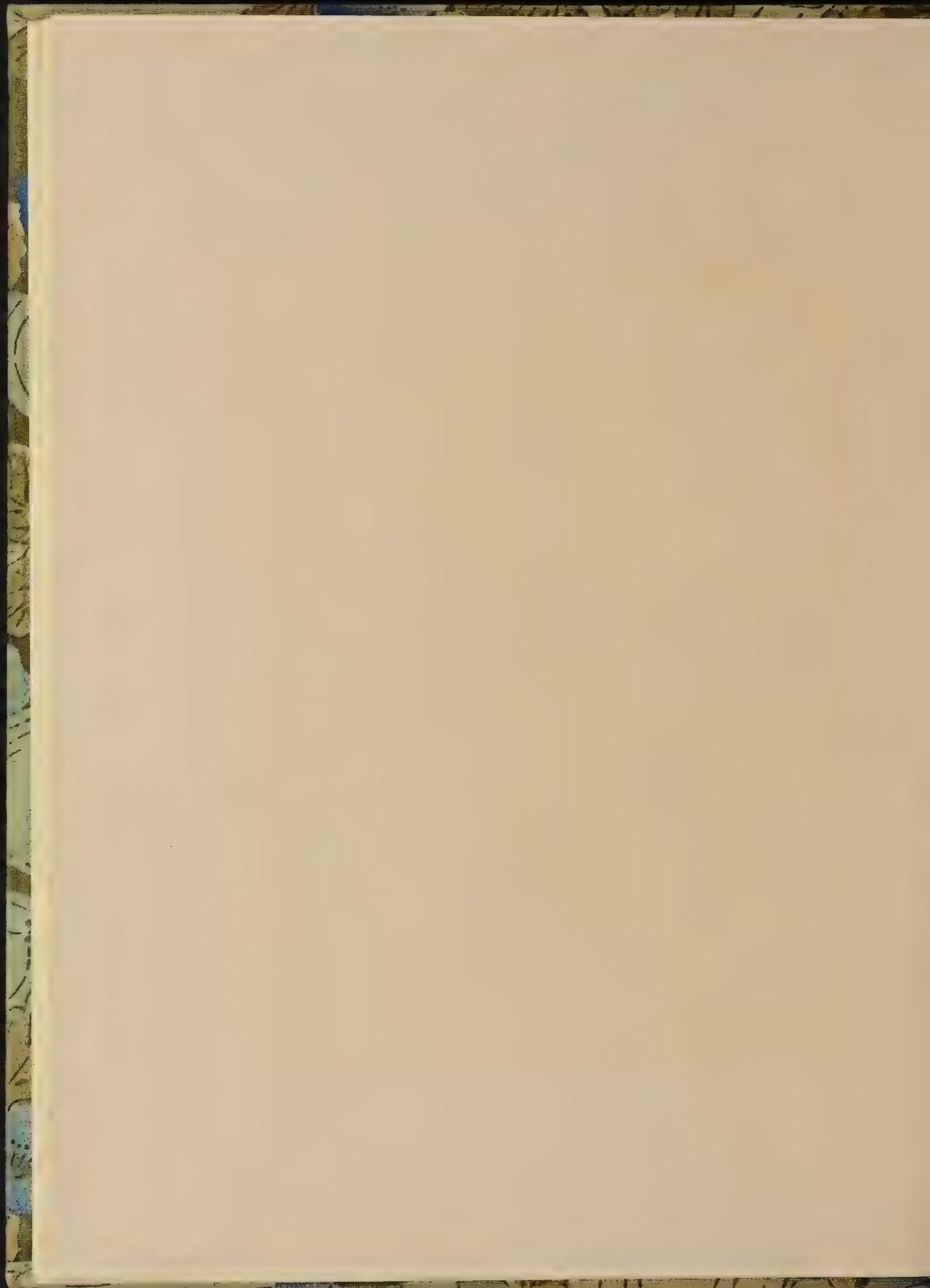
the seventeen sovereigns that occupied the throne from the days of Jimmu to the close of the fifth century, lived lives far beyond the span of years conceivable by the degenerate imaginations of subsequent mortals; perhaps because courtly annalists desired to push back as far as possible into mists of antiquity the age of gods from which Jimmu emerged, the earliest mortal figure; perhaps because tradition having preserved only the names of Emperors conspicuous for great achievements, the first writers of history had no choice but to divide the total period of sovereignty among a number of rulers too few to fill up the interval unless abnormal longevity were assigned to some of them. There is also a picturesque explanation: nothing Japanese lacks that aspect. It is that as generation after generation separated the descendants of the gods from their immortal progenitors, earthly influences gradually lent weight to years whose passage was at first lightly felt, until the divine power of resistance to the sapping effects of time ceased to be appreciable. In the *Shinto* mythology this gradual putting off of the immortal for the mortal, crystallizes into a pretty legend to which reference will be made in future pages. It is enough to note here that the bluest blood of old Japan always flowed back to an era of mysticism and miracle. Kamatari's ancestor, the companion of Jimmu, was a hero whose life extended to as many centuries as that of common mortals can count scores. At all events, the destroyer of the *Soga* and saviour of the throne could say that his progenitor came to Japan with Jimmu, as truly as any English noble or American citizen can connect his ancestor with William the Conqueror or the *Mayflower*. The difference was one of degree only. Kamatari began his reckoning four hundred years before Senlac and a thousand before the feet of the pilgrim fathers touched Plymouth Rock. Moreover, he carried it back thirteen centuries. These things are not unworthy of notice, for the descendants of Kamatari and his primeval ancestor occupy in Japanese history a place as important as the Imperial family itself. In recognition of his meritorious services he received the title of "Fujiwara," which signifies "wistaria plain," and was evidently chosen with poetic reference to the lusty bloom of his great deeds. The Fujiwara family, thus founded, became the repository of the empire's administrative power, and wielded it without intermission for nearly five hundred years. No less than ninety-five out of a hundred and fifty-five families constituting the Japanese Court nobility derive their origin from Kamatari, and bear the name of Fujiwara. It is the most ancient group of noble families in the world, whether Kamatari be regarded as its founder, or whether its origin be traced to his progenitor, Jimmu's companion-in-arms.

A favorite saying of the Japanese is that throughout twenty-four centuries of almost perpetual war and political intrigue, from the founding of the empire to the fall of feudalism, the sacro-sanctity of the sovereign's person never failed to receive full recognition, nor ever did any subject aspire to compass the overthrow and deposition of the heaven-descended race. That assertion must be interpreted relatively. The *Soga* chief Umako not only caused the Emperor Susun to be assassinated, but contrived also that the same fate should overtake

STREET VENDER OF FLOWERS.

The love of flowers among the Japanese is universal and amounts almost to a passion. The whole population turns out several times in the course of the year to visit places which are noted for certain kinds of blossoms. Food and raiment are relative luxuries, while flowers are a necessity.

To supply the daily demand for flowers the street venders carry them about the principal cities on bamboo frames, balanced at the ends of a pole carried across the shoulder. They are veritable walking bouquets, and add much to the picturesque street life that, like a kaleidoscope, abounds in movement and color.







two Imperial princes whose accession to the throne would have interfered with his ambitious designs. The Fujiwara family, after they had wrested the supreme power from the *Soga*, retained it in their own hands by a constantly repeated device less violent, though not less disloyal; they seldom allowed the sceptre to be held by an Emperor after he had attained his majority, or, if they suffered him to enjoy the position during a few years of manhood, they compelled him to abdicate so soon as independent aspirations began to impair his docility. At the cost of traversing a cherished dogma of national faith, readers of Japanese history are compelled to conclude that the sanctity derived by the sovereign from his divine lineage contributed to the stability of his throne only in so far as it constituted an inviolable charter of power for the nominal agents of His Majesty's will. Imperialism was a name to conjure with before the public, but its representative was a puppet in the hands of the conjurers behind the scenes. Not immediately, indeed, did the Fujiwara nobles develop this dominant influence. Nearly two centuries separated the death of the loyal Kamatari from the unscrupulous usurpations of his descendants, Yoshihisa and Mototsune, at the close of the ninth century. The first subject in the empire at that time was the *Daijō Daijin*—essential administrator and great official—a title employed until 1885 to designate the Prime Minister. Mototsune, in the year 888, invented the still higher office of *Kambaku*, or Regent, and had it made hereditary in the Fujiwara family. The *Kambaku* stood between the throne and the nation. Every official communication must pass through his hands before reaching the sovereign. Thus the authority of the *Mikado*—sublime gate, as the Emperor was called—practically passed to the Fujiwara, though nominally he remained the supreme head of the nation. Yet another office, destined to figure conspicuously in later Japanese annals, and to become a familiar word in foreign ears also, was created for Fujiwara-no-Hidesato in the year 939 A. D.—the title of *Shōgun*, or generalissimo. Not only the administrative but also the military power thus fell into the hands of this great family. The century that succeeded Hidesato's nomination as *Shōgun* may be described as the period



KIYOMIZU TEMPLE, KYOTO.

The origin of this temple is lost in the mists of antique fable. Its construction is unique and original.

when Imperialism reached its lowest stage of decline, and private ambition attained its greatest height of arrogance. The Fujiwara had contrived that the choice of a consort for the Emperor should be legally limited to a daughter of their family, five branches of which were specially designated as the repositories of that honor through all ages, and were consequently distinguished by the name *Go-sekke*—the five assistant families. When a son was born to the sovereign, the Fujiwara had him brought up in one of their own palaces, and on his accession to the throne the particular Fujiwara noble that happened to be his grandfather became Regent. The extreme possibilities of this arrangement were illustrated in the case of Fujiwara-no-Michinaga. He held the office of Regent during the reign of three Emperors (987–1037 A. D.); his three daughters became the consorts of three successive sovereigns, and he was grandfather simultaneously of a reigning Emperor and of an heir apparent. That was the zenith of the Fujiwara influence. Michinaga himself appreciated his extraordinary position. He composed a stanza to the effect that the universe seemed to have been created for his uses, and that the round of the full moon was not more complete than the satisfaction of his desires. An author of his era transmitted to posterity some notion of the Fujiwara magnificence in a volume entitled *Eigwa Monogatari*, or "a story of grandeur."

There now appeared upon the scene two other families destined to play great rôles in Japanese history—the Minamoto and the Taira, often called the *Genji* and the *Hei-ke*, *gen* and *hei* being the Chinese pronunciation of Minamoto and Taira, respectively. It will occur to the reader that to apply the term "family" to a tribe of puissant nobles and a multitude of office-bearers, with hosts of relations, connections and followers, all styling themselves "Fujiwara," or pledged to support the Fujiwara fortunes, is misleading. They were in fact a great clan, and they will henceforth be so designated, as will also the other groups of leaders having a common house name and rallying to a common cause. Some historians deny the propriety of distinguishing the Minamoto and the Taira genealogically from the Fujiwara. Strictly speaking, the criticism is just. The four families constituting the Taira clan were direct descendants of the Emperor Kwammu (782–806 A. D.), and the fourteen families of the Minamoto clan had the Emperors Saga (810–824 A. D.) and Seiwa (856–877 A. D.) for their ancestors. Hence, since the Fujiwara blood ran in the veins of all these sovereigns, the Minamoto, the Taira and the Fujiwara were relatives. In that light, too, they regarded each other for a time, the *Hei* and *Gen* contributing loyally to support the influence of the Fujiwara. But the origin of the Fujiwara differed radically from that of the Minamoto and the Taira. The Fujiwara gloried in a progenitor who traced his lineage to the earliest dawn of their country's human history, and who had received his name by way of reward for saving the throne. The Minamoto and the Taira derived their origin from princes born in concubinage, not in wedlock, for the support of whose imperial rank sufficient resources not being available, they had to be reduced to the position of ordinary nobles and appointed to official posts in Kyoto or the provinces. A provincial governorship in those times was a much-

coveted office. According to law, the term of its tenure was limited, but in practice the post descended from father to son, each occupant adding to the territorial possessions acquired by his predecessor and to the influence wielded by him. All uncultivated lands within the limits of a governor's jurisdiction fell lawfully into his possession, and in proportion as his local power developed, the central government in Kyoto found increased difficulty in controlling him. These provincial magnates gradually developed into great military chiefs, with large forces of well armed and carefully disciplined retainers under their command. They were called *Bu-ke*, or military houses, to distinguish them from the *Ku-ge*, or Court houses, whose

heads lived in Kyoto, monopolizing the administrative positions, but seeing their emoluments and their influence steadily circumscribed as the provinces passed beyond their sway. Here the student of Japanese history is confronted by one of the great lines of national cleavage, the differentiation of the military and civil classes. Such a separation seems to have been opposed to the genius of the people that invaded Japan from the West. Originally every male unit of the immigrant nation, from the sovereign to his humblest subject, was a soldier when armed service had to be rendered, and returned to civilian life when the sword could be laid aside. Probably such an absence of permanent distinction could not have long survived the multiplication of administrative functions that necessarily resulted as the sway of the invaders extended. But since these immigrants were, in fact, an expeditionary force, soldiering was their first business, and the management of civil affairs must have been regarded as a secondary function, the inevitable outcome of armed conquest. That belief had certainly existed for many centuries, and had become ingrained in the character of the people before Chinese systems of philosophy, ethics and politics began to be studied. It seems impossible now to determine with any accuracy the interval that separated the arrival of the "heaven-sent" invaders in the main island of Japan and the advent of east Asiatic civilization.

Foreign critics of Japan's annals ascribe her earliest knowledge of the art of writing to the fourth or possibly the fifth century of the Christian era, but her own historians confi-



GEISHA GIVING ENTERTAINMENT.

Professional musicians and dancers are engaged in entertaining guests at private banquets and theatrical performances, as well as in the principal temples.

dently place it in the third century. These tell of a son of the Emperor Ojin (270-313 A. D.) who possessed such an accurate acquaintance with Chinese calligraphy that he detected and exposed the use of disrespectful ideographs in a memorial presented by Korean ambassadors to the Japanese throne. Add to this source of uncertainty the fact that everything relating to the warlike invaders of Japan prior to the Christian era is wrapped in obscurity, and it becomes plain that we cannot hope to know, in the first place, how long the Mongoloid and Malayan invaders had lived side by side and what traits of the character of each had become impressed on the amalgam of the two before the influences of a new civilization began to be felt from abroad; or, on the other, how long those influences had been active before their practical results became so salient as to emerge clearly from the pages of a crudely compiled history. But there will certainly be no serious error in affirming that the two races of warlike invaders had been in close contact, and that Japan had been ruled by a military form of government for at least seven hundred years before Chinese ideas began to permeate the national mind. The first lesson taught by the new cult was that civil and military functionaries should be differentiated; the second, that the administration of State affairs demanded a complexity of mechanism and an elaboration of ceremonial hitherto unimagined by the Japanese. Almost simultaneously Buddhism arrived upon the scene, and presented vivid object lessons illustrating the sensuous capabilities of the alien civilization. To the



TORII AT MIYAJIMA.

The temple at Miyajima enjoys great celebrity. The torii in front of it which stands in the sea, is a favorite motive of Japanese art.

these sculptured wonders, the resplendent paraphernalia of the temples, the gorgeous vestments of the priests, and the refined luxury of their lives—all these new and wonderful things must have seemed to them like a revelation from some heaven higher than the thrones of Jimmu's ancestors.

Japanese who in early ages had delighted in simplicity; in whose eyes no color presented such decorative charms as white, and who believed that every human conception of ornamentation must fall far short of nature's achievements, the glittering images brought by the disciples of Sâkyamuni, the grand and massive architectural structures designed for the enshrinement of

An effeminate spirit began to quench the old martial fire of the Yamato conquerors. Officials were created by scores to undertake duties that had previously been unconceived, or, if conceived, had been discharged as mere corollaries. Sumptuary regulations were issued; distinctions of rank acquired new importance; the notion of shaking off the dust of the world from feet that simulated weariness, and passing the autumn of a still green life in luxurious retirement, found favor with sovereign and subject alike, and gradually all functions the discharge of which involved danger or demanded the exercise of really sterling qualities, came to be monopolized by ambitious men who understood the power of the sword and perceived tempting opportunities for its exercise in the enervated condition of the court and its immediate *entourage*. It is not for a moment suggested that the introduction of Chinese ethics, philosophy and politics, or the influences of Buddhism were altogether bad. To both, Japan owes a heavy debt. But as an old Oriental adage says, there is no use without an abuse, no gain without a loss. Thus, if Chinese systems are directly responsible for the differentiation of the civil and military classes in Japan—a necessary distinction from many points of view—they are indirectly responsible for the growth of an official bureaucracy on the one hand, and of a military feudalism on the other; conditions that fostered exactions, collisions and catastrophes fatal to the tranquillity and prosperity of the nation.

The two great clans mentioned above, the Minamoto and the Taira, were the first practically recognized depositories of military authority. As to what was signified by military authority in the era when these clans began to develop strength, a short explanation is needed. In the year 702 A. D. an immense boon was conferred on the nation by the promulgation of a remarkable body of laws, called the *Taiho* Code, after the name of the era of its enactment. Under the provisions of this Code four departments were created for dealing, executively and judicially, with all matters of criminal and civil law. But a century later, during the reign of the Emperor Saga, when the difficulty of providing for the numerous scions of the Imperial family began to be embarrassing, the functions of these four departments were intrusted to a single board, the *Kebishi-cho*, the headship of which was conferred on one of the princes. The powers wielded by such a board being immense, and its notifications having equal force with Imperial ordinances, ambitious men naturally sought the appointment of chief *Kebishi*, which, however, fell almost invariably to a prominent member of the *Bu-ke*, or military houses. Thus the military class came to exercise the power of life and death, reward and punishment, in peace as well as in war, and to act as final arbiters in all questions where property was concerned. In the middle of the ninth century each province had its *Kebishi*, and since one of the principal duties of these officials was to check the bandits and marauders then infesting remote districts, they necessarily had considerable forces under their command. As for the military organization, it was placed at the beginning of the eighth century on a very complete footing. Service was compulsory for all *Samurai*, as the non-civilian element of the population was designated; that is to say, the

section of the people that did not include farmers, artisans or traders. Conscripts, having been selected by lot, were either drafted into divisions serving in the nearest locality, or sent up to the capital, there to be embodied in six corps of guards. The provincial troops, constantly exercised in the use of the sword, the spear and equestrian archery, attained and maintained a high degree of efficiency; but the metropolitan guards soon yielded to the enervating influences that surrounded them, and ceased to be useful except as factors in the pageant of pomp and parade affected by the great nobles, or as instruments in furthering their intrigues.

Here also note must be taken of the gradual growth of great estates, to which brief reference has been made above. The embryo of these territorial acquisitions is to be found in an ancient system of apportioning the revenues from certain fixed properties as emoluments for high officials. By and by there came into vogue a custom of making special grants of land to favorite ministers or to meritorious officials; and ultimately areas reclaimed and brought under cultivation were recognized as the estates of those that had reclaimed them. By the provisions of the *Taiho* Code (702 A. D.) all the land in the country became the nominal property of the sovereign, but at the same time the principle of allotment to individuals received recognition, and was largely practised. Moreover, the operation of the Code was never extended to waste lands, whatever their producing capacities. Resumption and reassignment of all allotted lands ought to have taken place every sixth year, according to law, but the enactment remained virtually a dead letter unless special considerations prompted its enforcement. Under such circumstances, it is easy to see that nobles, powerful enough to bend the laws to their convenience, or charged with the duty of administering them, were in a position to extend the area of their territorial possessions by purchasing the lands of persons indisposed to reclaim or cultivate them, and by becoming assignees of lands that seemed to be in danger of resumption. In this way immense tracts came into the possession of military nobles or of Buddhist temples, for the priests in every age showed a keen practical appreciation of the potentialities of portly revenues. These estates were exempted from taxation. Their holders came to be called *Daimyo*, or "great names;" armies of retainers and servitors obeyed their orders; their authority was locally supreme, and the provincial governors nominated in Kyoto either made no attempt to interfere or carefully absented themselves from the scene of their supposed jurisdiction. This state of affairs existed notably in the eastern provinces, where no less than eight Minamoto families were classed as *Daimyo* at the commencement of the twelfth century, while in the west and south the Taira influence dominated.

From the beginning of the twelfth century to the close of the sixteenth, the whole foreground of Japanese history is occupied by sanguinary struggles between the Minamoto and the Taira clans. Nothing comparable with this five-centuries war is to be found in the annals of any country. Intervals of peace, more or less brief, of course separated eras of

battle, but, on the whole, the blessing of complete and continued tranquillity was never enjoyed. A dispute about the succession to the throne supplied the prime cause of the interminable contest. The Fujiwara Regents' custom of contriving that no sovereign should continue to wield the sceptre after he had attained an age inconsistent with the free exercise of the Regent's power, could not always be practised without provoking resistance or suggesting intrigues. The year 1159 saw the great nobles in Kyoto divided into two groups: one supporting the succession of the son of an Emperor who had been compelled to abdicate; the other, that of the brother of an Emperor who had died at the age of 16 under suspicious circumstances. A battle was fought, memorable for its strangely internecine character. The rival princes stood to each other in the relation of uncle and nephew. The same relationship existed between two Taira leaders that had espoused opposite sides. A Minamoto chief



KIYOMIZU TEMPLE, KYOTO.

The origin of this temple is lost in the mists of antique fable. It is unique in construction. The front platform is used for a dancing stage and the two small projecting wings for an orchestra.

found himself fighting against his own son, and a Fujiwara Regent led an army against his brother, the Second Minister of State. One day's fighting practically settled the question of the succession, but opened a campaign destined to last for five hundred years. The story of this unparalleled contest contains chapters of splendid bravery, of heroic devotion, of consummate generalship and of brilliant administrative ability. But it contains, also, pages of craven cruelty, of degraded cunning, of venal treachery and of debauched incompetence. Yet the memories that it bequeathed to later generations were those of great warriors and wise legislators, rather than of weaklings and incapables. Kyomori, Yoritomo, Yoshitsune, Yasutoki, Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu are names that every Japanese speaks with just pride. The most picturesque and in many respects the most remarkable figure among the seven is that of Hideyoshi, commonly called the *Taiko*. He was born in 1536 in the

province of Owari. His father, a soldier of straitened means, anticipated for the child no future brighter than service in the lowest ranks of some nobleman's retinue. The lad did not give any indications of great capacity. Of stunted stature, exceptionally dark complexion and strikingly ill-favored countenance, his physical imperfections were not balanced by any show of diligence in study or aptitude in acquiring knowledge. Wayward, mischievous, unendowed with any attractive or promising qualities, this strange child was nevertheless destined to become the greatest captain and the most astute statesman that his country had ever possessed. The story of his life has been written again and again. It is too striking to be epitomized. Never, perhaps, has there been a more conspicuous illustration of the old experience that circumstances beget the men to deal with them. Had Hideyoshi belonged to any of the great families whose struggle for supremacy was deluging the country with blood, the mere fact of his lineage must have arrayed against him a host of hostile rivals. But he was despicably common. Not a drop of blue blood clouded his faculties. Solely by force of military genius he conquered wherever he fought, and by an acute perception of the value of justice and the uses of clemency he made content and tranquillity the successors of turbulence and disaffection. When he attained his twenty-third year, exactly four centuries had elapsed since the great battle of the succession in Kyoto. That battle placed the Emperor Nijo upon the throne, and established the military supremacy of the Taira clan under the leadership of the renowned Kyomori. Thirty years later the clan had been crushed beyond hope of resurrection, and its rivals, the Minamoto, had grasped the sceptre of administrative power, and established their headquarters at Kamakura.

It is improbable that in choosing Kamakura for the seat of his government Yoritomo appreciated the full advantages of a military capital separated by three hundred miles from the Imperial metropolis, and practically segregated from the intrigues that disturbed Kyoto and from the atmosphere of luxury and laziness that enervated the noble denizens of the southern city. The eastern provinces had long been the seat of Minamoto influence, and Yoritomo doubtless found it natural to establish his headquarters in the districts whence he derived his resources and where his loyal partisans were assembled. But whatever of deliberate selection or whatever of happy accident was responsible for his procedure, this completely independent consolidation of his power assumes a character of profound astuteness when viewed by the light of subsequent events, and marks an epoch in Japanese history. All the aspirants for supreme authority had hitherto made Kyoto the scene of their schemes and their struggles, thus bringing themselves and their supporters within the vortex of court cabals, and exposing their followers to the emasculating influences of the luxurious and refined city. None of these grandly ambitious personages had been able to eschew the intoxicating pastime of emperor-making. In the sixth century the *Soga* family attained a supreme position by interfering between the sovereign and the treasonable designs of their rivals, the *Mononobe*. But the very leader, Umako, to whose credit this loyal act stood,

became himself responsible, within a few years, not only for the assassination of an Emperor but also for the enthronement of a lady related to his own family. Thenceforth, during the *Soga's* brief tenure of supremacy, the circle of their influence and intrigue narrowed rapidly round the throne, and seemed likely to close on it altogether, when, Kamatari interposing the old weapons of murder and extirpation, the *Soga* "became extinct" after half a century of dictatorship. With Kamatari the Fujiwara clan rose to eminence, but they, too, played with sovereigns as with puppets, thus exposing their own strength to the shocks of popular indignation and inviting the constant intrigues of loyal subjects or impotent monarchs. Kyomori, the Taira leader, had no sooner mastered the political situation than he, in turn, sought to secure for himself and his heirs the ægis of imperialism by contriving that the Emperor's consort should be a Taira, as she had hitherto been a Fujiwara. He thus forced the Fujiwara into the arms of his enemies, and set revolving the wheels of conspiracies destined ultimately to crush him. For the mandate that raised the standard of the Minamoto against the Taira emanated from a prince whose brother Kyomori had compelled to abdicate after a reign of only three years, and whose father he had actually seized and placed in confinement. Most significant of all was the fact that, at the final battle of Dan-no-ura, when the Taira power received its death blow, the widow of Kyomori sprang into the sea, carrying with her the Emperor Antoku, then a child of only five; a tragedy that aptly closed the long drama of six centuries during which sovereigns had moved across the national stage as mere lay figures, directed by mechanism that they never for an instant controlled. All this underwent a complete change at the hands of the Minamoto chief Yoritomo. His policy was to establish the military power on an independent basis, and to avoid any semblance of collision with the throne. The measures that he elaborated with those objects evinced consummate wisdom and foresight, but to describe them here would involve details inconsistent with the general brevity of this sketch. It will suffice to say that, though conflicts did afterwards take place between the emperors in Kyoto and the military autocrats in Kamakura, not the ambition of



A CAVE DWELLER AT DOGASHIMA.

When a small dwelling can be rented for fifty cents a month it would seem unnecessary to live in a cave. But poverty requires even this small economy.

the latter, but efforts on the part of the former to recover their grasp of administrative authority, were responsible, in the main, for such incidents.

Kamakura, when Yoritomo thought of establishing his capital there, was a little fishing village, standing on the shores of a quiet bay, overlooked by wooded hills and cliffs of gentle contour. That is its description to-day. A tiny hamlet consisting of a few thatched cottages represents what was once a vast city, the houses of its million inhabitants covering plains where rice and barley now grow, and its streets stretching into the recesses of highlands that no longer betray the smallest trace of such intrusion. The grave of Yoritomo looks down from a nook among pine groves on the desolation that has replaced so much magnificence, on a temple where fragments of the great conqueror's armor are preserved, and on the spot where the ambassadors of Kublai Khan were executed. Kamakura is still celebrated, indeed, not for the sake of what it once was. It owes the notice it now receives to a bronze image of Amida, colossal in size, inimitable as a work of art, its face of intellectual and passionless serenity typifying the everlasting calm that has fallen on these scenes of ancient tumult and puissance. Here Yoritomo organized the Shogunate as the repository of all administrative authority in the empire. The title of "Shogun" had been originally adopted by the Fujiwara chief Sumitomo, in the middle of the tenth century. Its functions were then of a purely military character. But the "Shogun" of Yoritomo's construction may be best described as a military dictator, exercising supreme sway in all departments of State, though nominally subservient to the sacred sovereign in Kyoto, the ultimate source of all power, who, by right of divine descent, occupied the position of the nation's hierarch. The Kamakura Shogun had his department of public archives, his department of justice, his department of civil administration and his department of military affairs. High constables in all the provinces and intendants of the great estates officiated in his interests and obeyed his control. The local magnates everywhere stood to him in the relation of vassal, and every landholder in the realm contributed a bushel of grain per acre to his exchequer. But the power thus created could be swayed by strong hands only. After Yoritomo's death the political drama that had been played for so many centuries in Kyoto, was reproduced at Kamakura. Just as in the Imperial city the Fujiwara Regents (*Kwambaku*) usurped sovereign sway, taking care that the throne should always be occupied by minors, so in the city of the Shoguns another kind of regents (*shikken*) soon succeeded in getting the substance of authority into their hands, leaving its shadow only in the possession of the boys who, through their contrivance, bore the title of Shogun. Out of these intrigues tumult soon grew afresh. Once more the empire echoed from end to end with the tramp of armies and the clash of weapons, and only the extraordinary genius of a Hideyoshi succeeded in evolving peace and order out of such confusion and chaos. Even Hideyoshi might have found the task beyond his strength had he not been assisted by Ieyasu, a Minamoto, the founder of the Tokugawa line of Shoguns. Ieyasu had once stood in armed opposition to Hideyoshi, and on that sole

YOMEI-MON AT NIKKO.

This exquisitely beautiful structure called Yomei-mon is one of the gateways in the mausoleum of Ieyasu at Nikko, and is accounted the finest of its kind in all Japan. It is a mass of elaborate wood-carving gorgeously decorated in lacquer and gold, but the colors are so artistically blended that the general effect is in perfect taste. The pattern on one of the pillars has been purposely carved upside down, owing to a superstitious notion that flawless perfection might excite the jealousy of Heaven and bring misfortune on the House of Tokugawa.







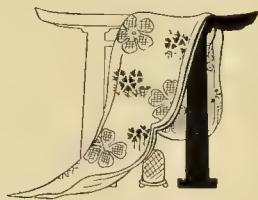
occasion throughout his long career of campaigns, Hideyoshi had failed to come off victorious. The high estimation he had already formed of the Tokugawa chieftain's sagacity as a statesman was now supplemented by profound respect for his talents as a general. On his deathbed Hideyoshi spared no effort to secure to his infant son the inheritance of his own marvellous successes, and to that end sought, above all things, to enlist the co-operation of Ieyasu. The Tokugawa leader promised what was asked of him, and to his honor it must be recorded that he faithfully endeavored to be true to his word. But circumstances proved over strong for him. Two years later (1600) a battle, virtually the final and certainly the greatest in the campaign of five centuries, was fought at Sekigahara, in Owari. It placed Ieyasu on such a pinnacle of power that every *Daimyo* throughout the empire had no choice but to make act of submission. The last to yield was Shimazu of Satsuma, and one of the chief sufferers by the ascendancy of the Tokugawa cause was Mori of Choshu, who found himself stripped of six out of the eight provinces that had hitherto owned his sway. Readers of these outlines of Japanese annals will have studied them very superficially if they require to be told that when the Tokugawa dynasty fell from power two hundred and sixty-seven years later, it received its death blow at the hands of Satsuma and Choshu.



CUSTOM HOUSE AT YOKOHAMA.

III.

THE STORY OF THE FORTY-SEVEN RONINS.



HE history of a country whose records are those of many centuries must be rich in legends, traditions and heroic episodes. These depict the character of a nation better than any mere chronicle of facts may do—necessarily but the outline, the skeleton of history. They are the flesh and blood of history; they vitalize the narrative with the life of a people. The history of Japan is that of a valiant, warlike folk. Its warfare, however, has been chiefly internal; first, the conquest of inferior populations inhabiting the islands; and then, almost down to the present day, century after century of feudal strife. When it was not civil war it was civic turmoil, incessant conflict between the retainers of great lords or of minor chieftains. The stories of these feuds have been likened to the broils of the clans of Scotland in the olden time. They also strongly resemble the feuds that so largely make up the history of the mountaineers in Kentucky and Tennessee, a phase of life in the Southern States of the American Union which, unhappily, is not yet wholly a matter of the past.

As typical of Japanese history one of these relations, that of the heroic deed of "The Forty-seven Ronins," is herewith reproduced. It is the most famous of its kind. In Japanese history it stands like an episode in the Iliad for that of Greece. Though a modern event as measured in the past of Japan (for the history of our New World had passed the half-way mark to the present from its beginning with Columbus), it belongs to the ancient life that is gone by forever, and might well have occurred at any time from a thousand years ago down to the middle of this century. Some of the greatest traits in Japanese character are exhibited in the relation—loyalty, fidelity, persistent endeavor, valor and heroic self-sacrifice. It is strictly true; the story bears on its face the evidence of verisimilitude; the most accurate and graphic of modern newspaper reporters could not have done the work more faithfully than has the unknown recorder, who, it would seem, must have obtained it from the actors themselves. The forty-seven valiant ones are almost demigods to the Japanese folk; their graves are a popular shrine for pilgrims from all parts of the country, and their story is the subject of a drama which has become a classic in the theatres of the land. The story is enacted in full detail and with exceeding realism in parts, ending in a deluge of gore.

The meaning of the word "Ronin" first needs explanation. Its literal rendering

would be "wave-man," and it signifies one who is tossed about aimlessly, hither and yon, as by the waves of the sea. In regular usage a Ronin is a sort of roamer or wanderer, a superior grade of tramp or vagabond. The name is applied to men of gentle blood who were thereby privileged to bear arms, and who were in the service of feudal lords. Such a man becomes a Ronin when in any way he leaves the service of his lord. This may be voluntarily or by dismissal, or chance may make him a wanderer. His condition is then akin to that of the hireling soldier, the mercenary or knight-errant of olden days in Europe. Without visible means of support, the Ronin was ready to hire himself to a new lord, and not infrequently would become a bandit. Others more honestly inclined would degrade their social standing by going into trade. Men would often become Ronins for political reasons, leaving their masters' service out of loyal attachment, so as not to involve their lords in the consequences of acts for which they alone were responsible. Should the trouble pass over they would be likely to resume their old service. In the earlier days of the transition period to modern conditions men who were eager for knowledge of the outer world and ambitious to fit themselves for the new order of things would temporarily become Ronins and enter the service of foreigners at the treaty ports. Distasteful as such service usually was they would bear it uncomplainingly, giving no outward sign of the keen irritation that the service of masters inconsiderate, rough and often barbarous in conduct would cause to men of gentle blood, fine breeding and proud in spirit. Even to-day young men of high standing not infrequently seek menial positions with resident foreigners for the sake of the coveted knowledge of European ways which it gives them.

The men who became famous as the Forty-seven Ronins were, at the time when the tale begins, retainers in the service of a daimyo called Asano Takumi no Kami. He was lord of the castle of Akō in the province of Harima. This was at the beginning of the eighteenth century. An ambassador from the Mikado's court at Kyoto had been sent to the Tycoon at Yedo. Takumi no Kami and another daimyo named Kamei Sama had been hon-



A JAPANESE WATERFALL.

ored with the commission of receiving and entertaining the ambassador. It was essential that they should be thoroughly versed in the etiquette of an occasion so important, and a high official called Kira Kōtsuké no Suké was selected to instruct them in the ceremonies proper to the affair. The two daimyos, therefore, went every day to the castle to receive their teachings. It turned out to be an unpleasant task for the pupils, for Kōtsuké no Suké was an avaricious man. The two nobles, in accordance with custom, had brought him presents in return for the instruction imparted. But he regarded these as insufficient, so in his resentment he not only took no pains to instruct them properly, but even tried to make them ridiculous. A sense of duty caused Takumi no Kami to endure patiently the insolent conduct of their instructor. Kamei Sama, on the other hand, had not the self-restraint of his companion, and was so enraged that he made up his mind to kill Kōtsuké no Suké. So on a certain night when Kamei Sama had returned to his own home from a vexatious session with Kōtsuké no Suké he called his councillors together for a secret consultation. He told them: "Kōtsuké no Suké has insulted us, Takumi no Kami and myself, while serving in attendance on the ambassador from the Mikado. His conduct is so unbearable that I was impelled to kill him at once. But I thought that if I should kill him within the castle limits my family and all my retainers would be ruined, in addition to the condemnation of myself to death. I therefore desisted. Such a creature's life is worthless; his living disgraces the people. I will kill him to-morrow when I go to the castle. I am determined upon it, and I will hear no remonstrance." As he spoke his face became purple with anger.

One of the councillors was a man of sound judgment; he perceived that it would be vain to remonstrate, so he said: "My lord's words shall be obeyed. Your servant will make due preparations; so, when my honorable lord returns to the court to-morrow, and if he receives further affronts from Kōtsuké no Suké, let him meet his death."

This pleased Kamei Sama, and he was impatient for the dawning of day that he might avenge his insults. The councillor, however, was deeply troubled by the words of his lord. He went home and thought over the matter. He concluded that it would be wise to appeal to the miserly propensities of Kōtsuké no Suké, and he thought that no payment would be too great to save his master and all his house from ruin. He therefore got together all the money he could find, and gave it into the hands of his servants. They then rode off together that very night to the palace of Kōtsuké no Suké, and he said to the retainers of that dignitary: "My master, as an attendant upon the envoy from the Mikado, feels deeply indebted to the honorable lord Kōtsuké no Suké for his instruction in the ceremonies belonging to the proper reception of the Imperial ambassador. He feels that it is but a poor present which he sends by me in return, but he hopes that his honorable lordship will consent to take the humble gift, and he commends himself to the good graces of your honorable master."

He then displayed a thousand ounces of silver for Kōtsuké no Suké and a hundred ounces besides for distribution among his retainers. The sight of so much money delighted

the eyes of the retainers, and their joy was spoken in their thanks. They requested the councillor to wait a moment, and they went straightway to tell Kôtsuké no Suké of the princely gift which had come from Kamei Sama with so courteous a message. Their master was overjoyed at the tidings; he at once sent for the councillor, and received him in an inner room of the palace; he thanked him, and made promise that when his master came in the morning he would give him most careful teaching in the required ceremonies.

The delight of Kôtsuké no Suké at the gift showed the councillor that his plan had been successful, and he went home rejoicing. Kamei Sama, however, lay all night pondering the revenge he should take in the morning, not dreaming of the stratagem of his retainer. At dawn he therefore went to the castle in a solemn mood. Kôtsuké no Suké astonished him greatly by meeting him most affably; his bearing had changed entirely and his politeness was remarkable. "My honorable Lord Kamei is early in his coming to-day," he said. "I cannot express with adequacy my admiration. To-day I shall call particular attention to several points in the ceremonial. Your honorable self, I trust, will excuse my bearing hitherto. You must have deemed me a man of great rudeness. But I am rough by nature, and I beg forgiveness for my seeming courtesy."

Kôtsuké no Suké went on in this manner, in bearing humble and ingratiating in speech. This mollified Kamei Sama, his heart was softened by degrees, and his determination to kill his instructor was relinquished. In this way the ruin of Kamei Sama and all his house was averted by the ruse of his councillor.

Then Takumi no Kami arrived at court shortly after. As he had sent no present, the feeling of Kôtsuké no Suké had not changed so far as he was concerned; indeed, he even sought to make him more ridiculous than ever; he sneered at him and insulted him continuously. Takumi no Kami, however, gave no outward sign of his annoyance, and patiently endured the conduct of his instructor. But this only intensified the insolence of Kôtsuké no Suké. At last he said disdainfully, "See here, my Lord Takumi, my sock-string has become loosened; have the goodness to tie it up."



DANCING GIRLS.

The dancing is seldom rhythmic but rather a series of graceful postures acting out some narrative or descriptive poem

The insult made Takumi no Kami hot with anger, but his sense of obedience on duty still kept his rage within bounds, and he did as he was told. Thereupon Kôtsuké no Suké turned upon him with scolding words: "What clumsiness! You cannot even tie a sock-string as it should be tied! It can be seen by anybody that you are a mere peasant, ignorant of Yedo manners!"

He then laughed insultingly and turned away to leave the room. This affront, however, was beyond even the patience of Takumi no Kami, and he called out, "Wait a moment, my Lord Kôtsuké."

"What will you?" responded Kôtsuké no Suké, turning toward him. Then, as he faced round, Takumi no Kami drew his dirk and aimed at the head of his enemy. Kôtsuké no Suké, however, was shielded by his court cap, and he received but a slight wound. He turned and ran. Takumi no Kami followed and struck at him again. But he missed aim and struck into a pillar with his weapon. Just then an officer of the court, Kajikawa Yosobei by name, came rushing upon the scene. He seized Takumi no Kami and held him until Kôtsuké no Suké had escaped. There was great tumult in the place. Takumi no Kami was placed in confinement in an apartment of the castle; his arms were taken away, and he was put in charge of the censors.

The result of a council held on the case was that Takumi no Kami was given in keeping of a daimyo named Tamura Ukiyô no Daibu, to whose house he was taken and imprisoned. The wife and the retainers of Takumi no Kami were deeply grieved thereat. The council having finished its consideration of the matter, it was decided that Takumi no Kami must perform *hara-kiri*, and all his possessions were confiscated. This was in accordance with the law, for it was considered an outrage that he should have attempted to slay a man within the castle. Therefore Takumi no Kami disembowelled himself, his castle at Akô was confiscated with all his goods, and his family was reduced to poverty. His retainers were thus obliged to become Ronins. Some of them found other lords to serve, and others took to trade.

One of these Ronins was the principal councillor of Takumi no Kami. His name was Oishi Kuranosuké. He with forty-six other retainers thus set adrift in the world vowed to kill Kôtsuké no Suké and so avenge the death of their lord. Had Oishi Kuranosuké been with his master at the time, the calamity would never have occurred, for he was a sage councillor, and he also would have gained the favor of Kôtsuké no Suké for his lord by means of pleasing gifts; but he was at the castle of Akô, and the councillor who was with Takumi no Kami at Yedo was a stupid person. His lack of sagacity was thus the occasion of the disaster that brought death to his lord and ruin upon the house.

Oishi Kuranosuké and the other forty-six Ronins at once began their scheme to avenge their master by killing Kôtsuké no Suké, who, however, was well protected by a company of guardsmen lent him for the purpose by his father-in-law, Uyésugi Sama; they therefore con-

cluded that they must watch the opportunity to catch him unawares. So they scattered and assumed various disguises; some pretended to be merchants, others carpenters, and others ostensibly adopted various other trades. Kuranosuké, however, went away to Kyoto, where he built himself a house in the Yamashina quarter and gave himself up to a dissolute life—drunkenness, resort to evil houses, and other dissipations. It thus seemed that he had no thought of avenging his master's death.

As Kôtsuké no Suké had suspicions that the old retainers of Takumi no Kami would be plotting to kill him, he sent spies to Kyoto to bring him exact news concerning the doings of the chief among them, Kuranosuké. The old councillor, however, being determined to lead his enemy astray, continued his dissipated career in the company of drunkards and prostitutes. Once, when on the way home from a bad resort, he fell drunk in the street and went to sleep there, while those who passed derided him. Among those who saw him lying there was a man from Satsuma. He asked: "Is it not Oishi Kuranosuké, he who was councillor to Asano Takumi no Kami, lacking in courage to avenge his master's death, and keeping company with harlots and drunkards? Behold him drunk and lying in the street! The disloyal brute! Clown and coward! He deserves not to be called a Samurai!" Saying this he set his foot on the face of Kuranosuké and spat therein. Accounts of all this were brought to Kôtsuké no Suké at Yedo by the spies that he had sent to Kyoto. It allayed his fears, and he thought that now indeed there was no more danger.

The wife of Kuranosuké was naturally deeply grieved at the dissolute life to which he had given himself. So one day she said to him, "My honorable lord, you have told me that your evil courses were only assumed to the end that Kôtsuké no Suké might be thrown off his guard. But truly it is now too much. I beg of you to restrain your conduct."

"Do not bother me!" was the answer made by Kuranosuké. "I will give no ear to such complaining. You do not like my manner of life? Then you may no longer be wife of mine, but go your own way. Then I will get a pretty girl out of a brothel and make of



A SAMURAI.

Under the feudal system the samurai were the retainers of the daimyô or feudal lords, and performed military service.

her a wife to please me. I am tired of having an old woman like you about my house; the sooner you leave it the better it will suit me!"

He flew into a passion, and his poor wife was sadly frightened at his rage. She begged him to be merciful: "O my honorable lord, speak not to me in that fearful manner. For twenty years I have been your wife and faithfully served you; I have borne you three children; I have kept by you in sickness and through affliction; you will not be so heartless as now to turn me away. Be merciful, I implore you!"

"Your lamentations will not serve you. I am determined that you shall go. The children too are in my way, and you may take them along with you."

In her extremity his wife went to her oldest son, Oishi Chikara, and begged him to intercede for her with his father. But all in vain; Kuranosuké was not to be persuaded. So the abandoned wife returned to her native place with her two younger children. Oishi Chikara, however, stayed behind with his father.

Word of all this was also borne to Kôtsuké no Suké by his spies. Hearing thus how Kuranosuké had turned his wife away, how he had bought a harlot out of a brothel and taken her as his wife, how he was degraded by debauchery and drunkenness, Kôtsuké no Suké deemed that now he truly had no longer reason to fear the coming of harm from such poltroons as the retainers of Takumi no Kami had shown themselves to be, lacking the loyalty and the courage to avenge the loss of their master. Gradually, therefore, he relaxed his vigilance, and he dispensed with half the company of body-guards which the father of his wife, Uyésugi Sama, had sent for his protection. He had no suspicion that thus he was entering the very trap which had been set for him by Kuranosuké, who, in fidelity to his master's memory, had even turned away his good wife with their beloved children. Most admirable and loyal servitor! Kuranosuké, thus persisting in his seemingly abandoned life, kept on deceiving his enemy. His fellow Ronins, however, had all gone to Yedo, where, in their guise of pedlers and workingmen, they managed to enter the palace of Kôtsuké no Suké, thus gaining accurate knowledge of its plan and how all the different rooms were arranged; also what manner of men were the members of the household, the ones who were faithful and courageous and the ones who were cowards. Kuranosuké received from them regular reports of all these things.

Finally it became evident to the faithful councillor that Kôtsuké no Suké had completely relaxed his vigilance, feeling that he had no more cause for alarm. He rejoiced that the hour of vengeance was near. A meeting place at Yedo for the forty-seven faithful men was agreed upon, and Kuranosuké quietly left Kyoto, unknown to the spies of Kôtsuké no Suké. The plans of the loyal Ronins were now complete, and in patience they waited the time for their consummation. The twelfth month had come; it was the height of winter and it was very cold. In the midst of a heavy snowfall one night, all the city being quiet and men sleeping peacefully on their mats, it seemed to the Ronins that it was the most

favorable occasion for carrying their plans into effect. After a consultation they separated into two bands, and to each man his duty was given. One of these bands was under the leadership of Oishi Kuranosuké. Its task was to make an attack upon the front gate. The other band was in charge of the son of Kuranosuké, Oishi Chikara, and unto it was assigned the attack upon the back entrance. Chikara, however, was but sixteen years old, and so Yoshida Chiuzayémon was detailed to guard the boy. It was agreed that, at the beat of a drum, as ordered by Kuranosuké, a simultaneous attack should be made. If any one should kill Kōtsuké no Suké and cut off his head he was to blow a shrill whistle. This would bring the others to the spot. The head, being identified, was to be borne to the Sengakuji Temple and laid upon the tomb of their beloved master in tribute to his memory. This being done they were to make report to the government concerning their deed, and then calmly await the sentence which would inevitably condemn them to death. All the Ronins vowed to follow this course.

The moment of attack was set at midnight. Having made themselves completely ready, the forty-seven brave men united in a farewell feast on the eve of the day that was to be their last in life. Oishi Kuranosuké thus spoke to his comrades:

"We shall attack our foe in his palace to-night. We shall surely meet with the resistance of his retainers, and we shall have to slay them. But it is sad to kill old men, and women and children; I therefore beseech each one of you to have great care not to kill a single person who is helpless."

The Ronins started promptly. There was a fierce wind with driving snow, but they hastened on their way against the storm, impatient for their vengeance. When they reached the palace of Kōtsuké no Suké they separated into two parties, as agreed, and Chikara went round to the gate back of the house with twenty-three men. A rope ladder was fastened to the porch roof, and four men climbed over into the court. Seeing that the whole household was sleeping, they surprised the guard in the porter's lodge, and bound them fast before they could be aware of what had happened.



GEISHA PLAYING KOTO.

The koto is the most aristocratic of Japanese musical instruments. It is played somewhat like a zither, but its tone is "plunkly."

The frightened guard pleaded for their lives. The Ronins promised to spare them if they would give up the keys of the gate. The captives, trembling with fear, told them that one of their officers kept the keys in his house. The Ronins then broke with a hammer the great wooden bolt with which the gate was fastened, and both the doors flew wide open before them. At the same moment Chikara and his men forced their way in by the rear entrance. A messenger was then sent to the neighbors with these words from Oishi Kuranosuké:

"We, the former retainers of Asano Takumi no Kami, now Ronins, are about to break into the house of Kôtsuké no Suké to take vengeance for the death of our master. But not being burglars nor murderers we shall do no harm to the neighbors. We therefore beg you to be at ease and have no fear."

Now Kôtsuké no Suké was so despised for his meanness that his neighbors would not come to his rescue. Kuranosuké took yet another step to avert danger of interference. To prevent the sending of any summons for rescue to relatives of the family and the consequent despatching of armed assistance for their foe, he stationed ten men with bows in hand on the roof that surrounded the courtyard on its four sides, commanding them to shoot any of those who tried to get away. The plans were now ready for execution, and the men were posted for their several duties. Therefore Kuranosuké beat the drum which gave the signal for the attack to begin. The noise awoke ten of the retainers of Kôtsuké no Suké. They came rushing to the front room, swords in hand, for the protection of their lord. The two parties fought hotly, and while the combat was at its height, Chikara, who had brought his men through the garden, forced his way into the house behind. Kôtsuké no Suké, stricken with fear, hid in a veranda closet, together with his wife and the female servants. His other retainers, who occupied a barrack outside the palace, were now coming to the aid of their comrades. The party of Ronins who had entered in front soon succeeded in overcoming and killing the ten retainers who opposed them, and they themselves did not lose a single man. Then they made their way through the house toward the back. Here they came together with Chikara and his band, and the two forces united. The main body of the retainers of Kôtsuké no Suké was now at hand, and a general combat followed. The Ronins were directed by Kuranosuké, who sat on a stool and issued his commands. The besieged household soon saw that their enemy was too strong for them, and an attempt was made to send word to Uyésugi Sama, the father-in-law of Kôtsuké no Suké, that he might come to help them with his forces. But as the men stationed on the courtyard roof shot down those who tried to get away on this errand, no aid was forthcoming. Kuranosuké, seeing his opponents in despair, called out aloud, "Our only foe is Kôtsuké no Suké; let him be brought out, whether living or dead!"

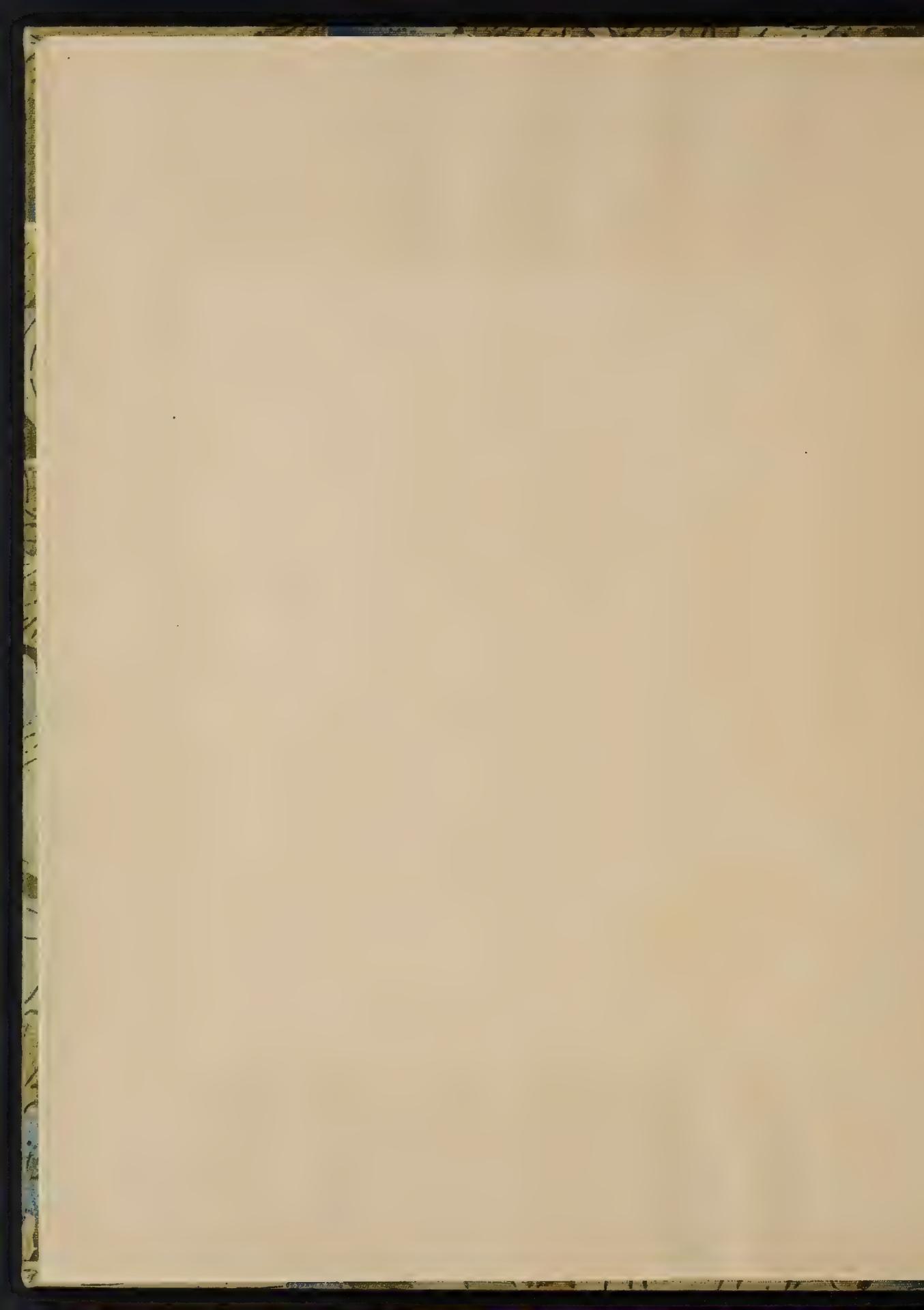
Three valiant retainers of their master were standing at the entrance of the chamber of Kôtsuké no Suké, sword in hand. One was named Kobayashi Héhachi, another was

BRIDGE AT ARASHIYAMA NEAR KYOTO.

Arashiyama is a suburb of Kyoto on the bank of the Katsura river, and is famous for its cherry blossoms in spring time and for the rapids in the river which extend for thirteen miles above the bridge. Shooting the rapids in flat-bottom canoes is an exciting diversion, the voyagers reaching Arashiyama about lunch time where several pretty tea houses provide refreshment. The rapids dash through a narrow gorge between lofty mountains literally covered with azaleas, which in early spring present a gorgeous appearance.







called Waku Handaiyu, and the name of the third was Shimidzu Ikkaku. They were all faithful men and skilled with the sword. They were so strong in their resistance that they were able for a while to keep at bay the entire force of the Ronins, and once they even compelled them to fall back. Oishi Kuranosuké was enraged at this, and he cried out to his force :

" How then ! are you to be forced back by three men when you have each and all sworn to die in vengeance for your master's death ? You are cowards, not worth the waste of words ! You should be happy in the thought of death in the cause of your lord." He then called out to Chikara, his son, saying, " Here, youngster ! Attack them yourself, and die if it is beyond your strength !" Chikara, thus encouraged, attacked Waku Handaiyu with a spear which he seized. He could not maintain himself against his adversary, and was forced gradually back, out into the garden, and stumbled into a pond. Handaiyu looked down into the pond, thinking to kill the boy, but Chikara wounded him in the leg so that he fell. The boy then jumped out of the water and killed him. Kobayashi Héhachi and Shimidzu Ikkaku had in the mean time been slain, and not one of all the retainers of Kôtsuké no Suké was left to fight. Chikara then went into a room in the rear, his sword in hand and covered with blood, to look for Kôtsuké no Suké. He could find only the son of that prince, a young nobleman called Kira Sahiroyé, who attacked him with a halberd, but Chikara soon wounded him and he ran away. The fighting had now ended with the slaying of all the retainers in the palace, but the Ronins had not yet been able to find Kôtsuké no Suké. Kuranosuké therefore divided his men into squads and sent them all over the house, but nothing but wailing women and children was to be found. The valiant forty-seven then began to fear that somehow Kôtsuké no Suké had managed to make his escape, and they were almost ready to commit *hara-kiri* at once. They determined, however, to make one final search.

Kuranosuké thereupon went into the chamber of Kôtsuké no Suké and touched the quilted bedclothes. He cried out : " The sleeping-garments of Kôtsuké no Suké are still



TUB MAKER.

Manufacturing in Japan is usually done in very small shops employing less than half a dozen artisans.

warm, so I think he cannot be far away. I believe he must surely be hidden in some place about the house."

The Ronins were greatly aroused by these words, and they began to search around everywhere. There was a picture in the raised part of the room, hanging near the place of honor. They tore this down, and found a large opening in the plastered wall behind it. A spear was poked in, and they could feel nothing beyond. A Ronin named Yazama Jiutarô went into this opening and found a small courtyard on the other side. In this courtyard was a small building for the storage of charcoal and wood for fuel. Looking into this place he saw in the dark a white object of some sort at the other end. He struck at this with his spear, whereupon two retainers jumped out at him and attacked him. He kept them at bay until one of the Ronins came to his aid, killing one of the men and fighting with the other, giving Jiutarô a chance to go into the place and poke around with his spear. Once more he perceived a white object and struck his spear at it. A cry as of a person hurt showed what it was. He ran toward the man, who was clad in white garments; the man, who had received a wound in the thigh from the spear, attempted to strike him with a dirk. Jiutarô snatched the dirk away, grabbed the man by the collar, and dragged him out into the open air. The other Ronin coming to his help, they took a good look at their captive, and found him a man with the looks of a noble, about sixty years old. He had on a night-robe of white satin, blood-stained from the wound made by Jiutarô's spear. Feeling certain that they had found Kôtsuké no Suké himself, they asked his name. He would not answer, and so they called their comrades with the signal whistle agreed upon. Oishi Kuranosuké brought a lantern and looked in the face of the captive. He saw that it was no other than Kôtsuké no Suké, and the identification was verified by the scar on the forehead from the wound made by their lord, Asano Takumi no Kami, when he attacked him in the castle.

Thereupon Oishi Kuranosuké knelt before the old daimyo and with the great deference due to his rank besought him in these words: "My honorable lord, you have before you the retainers of Asano Takumi no Kami. Because of the altercation between your honorable self and our lord, Asano Takumi no Kami was condemned to commit *hara-kiri*, and his house was ruined. Our errand to-night is to avenge his death as true and loyal servitors should do. Your honorable self we pray will confess that we have acted justly. We therefore beg your honorable highness to commit *hara-kiri*. I shall do myself the honor to act the part of your second. Then having humbly received the head of your honorable self I shall lay it upon the grave of Asano Takumi no Kami as an offering to his memory."

In this manner the Ronins treated Kôtsuké no Suké with the greatest respect, as befitted his exalted station, and they repeatedly urged him to commit *hara-kiri*. Their captive, however, continued to cower before them, trembling and saying not a word. Finally, perceiving that their efforts to induce him to die as a daimyo should, were without avail,

Kuranosuké threw him down and, with the very dirk with which their own lord, Asano Takumi no Kami, had committed *hara-kiri*, cut off his head.

The Forty-seven Ronins then placed the head in a bucket and joyously made ready to leave the house. But before they went they took great care to put out all the lights and fires, that the neighbors might suffer no harm from a conflagration. The morning dawned while they were on the road to Takanawa, the suburb of Yedo where the Sengakuji Temple stands. As they passed, the people came out to see them. They were terrible to behold, with their clothing and their weapons all covered with blood, but praise of their deed was in everybody's mouth, and folks marvelled at their loyal valor. All the while they were expecting that the father-in-law of Kôtsuké no Suké would pursue them and endeavor to capture the head. But they came safely to Takanawa, for Asano Takumi no Kami had been a cadet in the house of Matsudaira Aki no Kami, who was one of the eighteen chief daimyos of the empire, and that prince was so delighted when he heard what the Ronins had done that he was ready to help them should they be attacked. Hearing of this the father-in-law of Kôtsuké no Suké was, therefore, afraid to pursue them.

They came past the palace of Matsudaira Mutsu no Kami, lord of Sendai, at about seven o'clock in the morning. When that prince learned that they were coming he sent for one of his councillors and said to him: "They that were the retainers of Takumi no Kami are now passing by, having slain the foe of their master. I cannot duly express my admiration for their loyal deed. They must be tired and hungry after what they have done; therefore invite them to enter here and give them porridge and saki."

The councillor then went and did as he was bid, saying to Oishi Kuranosuké: "Honorable sir, I, a councillor to the Lord of Sendai, am sent by my master to urge you all, who must be tired from your night's work, to come within and enjoy as you may the poor refreshment that we have to offer you. These are the words that my lord sends to you."

Kuranosuké replied: "Honorable sir, our thanks are yours. The honorable prince is



A JAPANESE CEMETERY.

most kind to think of us. We shall humbly and gratefully take advantage of his hospitality." The Forty-seven Ronins then went into the palace of the prince. There they were served with porridge and saki, and they were praised by all the retainers of the house. Kuranosuké then said to the councillor: "Honorable sir, we are deeply in your debt for the hospitality you have shown us. But we must hasten on our way to Sengakuji, and so with all humbleness we will take our leave."

So profusely thanking their entertainers they departed from the palace of the Lord of Sendai and hurried on to Sengakuji. Here the abbot of the monastery received them at the front gate and led the way to Takumi no Kami's tomb. Having reached the grave of their lord, they took the head of Kôtsuké no Suké to a neighboring spring. They washed it clean therein, and then they laid it before the tomb. They next arranged with the priests of the temple to come to the grave and read prayers while they burnt incense. The first to burn incense was Kuranosuké. Then his son, Oishi Chikara, did the same, and the other forty-five Ronins followed, repeating the ceremonial. Kuranosuké then gave all the money he had with him to the abbot, saying: "We forty-seven men having committed *hara-kiri*, I pray that you give us proper burial. What I have to give is but little, but let it be devoted to prayers for the rest of our souls."

Admiration for the valiant devotion of the men before him brought tears to the eyes of the abbot, and he promised faithfully to do as they wished. The Forty-seven Ronins, thus having completed their work, waited patiently and in peace of mind to receive the mandate of the government.

Summons to appear before the Supreme Court came to them at last. Here the governors of Yedo and the public censors had come together, and the men were condemned in the following words: "Inasmuch as, without respecting the dignity of the city and not fearing the government, and having entered into conspiracy to kill your enemy, you assaulted by force the house of Kôtsuké no Suké and took his life, you are for your presumptuous action condemned to perform *hara-kiri*."

The sentence having been passed, the Forty-seven Ronins were separated into four groups and given into the keeping of four daimyos. To the palaces of these noblemen officers of the law were sent, and in their presence the Ronins were required to commit *hara-kiri*. But as this was simply what they had all the time been purposing to do, they died as brave men should. Their bodies were then taken to Sengakuji, where they were buried by the tomb of their lord, Asano Takumi no Kami. Their deed soon became famous, and people came from all parts to pray at the graves of these loyal men.

A Satsuma man was among those who came thither to pray. He threw himself prostrate before the grave of Oishi Kuranosuké and said: "I knew not that you were planning to avenge the death of your master when I beheld you drunk in the street at Yamashina in Kyoto. I believed that you were false to the memory of your lord, so I trod upon you in

contempt and I spat in your face. I have now come to implore pardon for the insult and to atone for the offence."

Saying this he once more prostrated himself before the grave of Oishi Kuranosuké. He then drew his dirk, plunged it into his abdomen, and fell dead. The abbot of the monastery so pitied the Satsuma man that he buried him beside the Ronins, and his grave to this day is with those of the forty-seven heroes.

Here ends the tale of the Forty-seven Ronins.

The heroic attributes of the Japanese race could hardly be more completely delineated than they are in this story. Greater valor could not be found in any people. But therein are also indicated certain finer traits that are rarely manifest in the annals of Western nationalities in corresponding stages of political development. For example, the measures taken by Kuranosuké, before storming the enemy's house, that no helpless person should be slain; and again, his precautions that the property of the neighbors should receive no harm. A characteristic instance of the manner in which the noblest of ethical motives form guiding principles of conduct with the Japanese people may be cited from Mr. Mitford's admirable "Tales of Old Japan." Unlike other trades the occupation of a swordsmith is regarded as an honorable calling, and is followed by men of gentle blood. Mr. Mitford relates that at Osaka he lived opposite to Kusano Yoshiaki, a swordsmith and a most intelligent and amiable gentleman, who was famous throughout his neighborhood for his good and charitable deeds. "His idea was that, having been bred up to a calling which trades in life and death, he was bound, so far as in him lay, to atone for this by seeking to alleviate the suffering which is in the world; and he carried out his principle to the extent of impoverishing himself." Mr. Mitford, who was second secretary of the British legation in the early days of foreign relations with Japan, the period of the Great Transition, witnessed the passing of the old order and the dawning of the new, which has made Japan a modern and mighty nation. In his days the sword-carrying prerogative of the Samurai class still existed. Thoroughly alive to the



A VENDER OF BROOMS.

evil effects of this custom upon the social order, he observed that the statesman who should enact a law forbidding the carrying of this deadly weapon would indeed have deserved well of his country; but he felt that it would be a difficult task to undertake, and a dangerous one. "I would not give much for that man's life," he said. "The hand of every swash-buckler in the empire would be against him." He said that one day, as he was talking over this and kindred subjects with a Japanese friend, a man of advanced and liberal views, the latter wrote down his opinion in a verse of poetry which ran as follows: "I would that all the swords and dirks in the country might be collected in one place and molten down, and that, from the metal so produced, one huge sword might be forged, which, being the only blade left, should be the girded sword of Great Japan." They little dreamed how soon this patriotic aspiration was practically to become a fact. The swords of the Samurai are things of the past; the valor and the strength that for ages had been dissipated in internal strife are now employed in wielding "the girded sword of Great Japan"—with what effect the world has lately seen.

The Temple of Sengakuji stands in the midst of a grove of fine old trees. A chapel on the left side of the great court of the temple is dedicated to the memory of the Forty-seven Ronins. Here the images of the loyal forty-seven, together with that of their master, are enshrined, surmounted by a gilded statue of the Goddess of Mercy. The statues of the heroes are beautifully carved in wood with realistic expression and spirited action. The faces are colored and the garments are lacquered. Some are gray-haired old men, and some are but boys. A little well of clear water lies close to the chapel beside a path that leads up the hill. An enclosed space, planted with ferns, surrounds the well, and a sign is inscribed to the effect: "This is the well where the head was washed; you must not wash your hands or your feet here." Further on there is a stall where books, pictures and medals commemorating the deed of the heroes are sold. Higher yet lies the famous cemetery where the forty-eight graves—those of the Forty-seven Ronins with that of the Satsuma man—stand beneath grand old trees. The little stones are each decked with evergreen, and each bears its tribute of water and incense. Just outside the cemetery rail stands the more important monument where their noble master lies buried. The place is kept in order by voluntary contributions.

The relics of the heroes are religiously treasured in the fireproof storehouse of the temple, and once every year they are exhibited to great crowds. Once every sixty years the monks of the temple hold a commemorative fair which is a national event and lasts nearly two months. Mr. Mitford relates how he was once admitted to a private inspection of the relics. "We were ushered, my friend and myself, into a back apartment of the spacious temple, overlooking one of those marvellous miniature gardens cunningly adorned with rockeries and dwarf trees in which the Japanese delight. One by one, carefully labelled and indexed boxes containing the precious articles were brought out and opened by the chief

priest. Such a curious medley of old rags and scraps of metal and wood! Home-made chain armor, composed of wads of leather secured together by pieces of iron, bear witness to the secrecy with which the Ronins made ready for the fight. To have bought armor would have attracted attention, so they made it with their own hands. Old moth-eaten surcoats, bits of helmets, three flutes, a writing-box that must have been any age at the time of the tragedy and is now tumbling to pieces, tattered trousers of what once was rich silk brocade, now all unravelled and befringed, scraps of leather, part of an old gauntlet, crests and badges, bits of sword handles, spear heads and dirks, the latter all red with rust, but with cer-

tain patches more deeply stained as if the fatal clots of blood were never to be blotted out,—all these were reverently shown to us. Among the confusion and litter were a number of documents, yellow with age and much worn at the folds. One was a plan of Kōtsuké no Suké's house, which one of the Ronins obtained by marrying the daughter of the builder who designed it."

One of the manuscripts was the receipt given by the retainers of the son of Kōtsuké no Suké, in return for his father's head restored to the family by the priests, in which the two items of "one head" and "one paper parcel" were acknowledged to have been received. A second manuscript was a document, a copy of which was found on the person of each of the forty-seven, according to the custom which makes it usual for a man, when about to commit some deed of violence that he holds to be justifiable, to carry a paper that sets forth his motives so that his memory may not be dishonored. The document in question recited concisely and with eloquent simplicity the reasons for the deed. It was stated that the high officials present having prevented Asano Takumi no Kami from carrying out his intention of killing his enemy, he "died without having avenged himself, and this was more than his retainers could endure. It is impossible to remain under the same heaven with the enemy of lord or father. For this reason we have dared to declare enmity against a personage of so exalted rank. This day we shall attack Kira Kōtsuké no Suké in order to finish the



AN AFTERNOON NAP.

Showing head-rest used instead of a pillow.

deed of vengeance which was begun by our dead lord. If any honorable person should find our bodies after death, he is respectfully requested to open and read this document." The date is the fifteenth year of Genroku, twelfth month. A third paper was that laid by the Ronins upon the tomb of their master, together with the head of his enemy. It ended: "Every day that we waited seemed as three autumns to us. Verily, we have trodden the snow for one day, nay, for two days, and have tasted food but once. The old and decrepit, the sick and ailing, have come forth gladly to lay down their lives. Men might laugh at us as at grasshoppers trusting in the strength of their arms, and thus shame our honored lord, but we could not halt in our deed of vengeance. Having taken counsel together last night, we have escorted my Lord Kōtsuké no Suké hither to your tomb. This dirk [that with which their master committed *hara-kiri* and with which his enemy's head was cut off by Oishi Kuranosuké] by which our honored lord set great store last year and intrusted to our care, we now bring back. If your noble spirit be now present before this tomb, we pray you, as a sign, to take the dirk, and striking the head of your enemy with it a second time, to dispel your hatred forever. This is the respectful statement of forty-seven men."

The suicidal rite of *hara-kiri*, for which *seppuku* is the more elegant word, dates back in Japan for time immemorial, though the ceremonies connected therewith have changed in the course of history. *Hara-kiri* is known by practically everybody who knows of such a country as Japan to signify suicide by disembowelling. It is the only form of death that was permissible to Samurai when death became a necessity, either according to one's own standard of conduct, or when condemned to death by law for any reason that does not effect a forfeiture of rank in that class. In connection with the act there are certain ceremonies, varying according to circumstance, which had to be observed with absolute fidelity to rule. As in the code laid down for duelling in the Western world, there must be seconds and witnesses. It is the office of the witnesses to certify the fact of death, but the seconds bear a more active part in the affair. They are friends of the principal, and it is the office of the chief second to strike off his head at the moment he disembowels himself. It was in the days of the Ashikaga, the third dynasty of the Shoguns (from 1336 to 1568 A. D.), that *hara-kiri* was made a third form of capital punishment, the other two being beheading and strangulation. This was done for persons of the Samurai class condemned to death. Anciently the ceremony took place in a temple, but in modern days it has been customary to perform it at night, either in the palace or the garden of a daimyo in charge of the condemned man. Men of higher rank had the privilege of making the palace the scene of their deed, but it was required that those of more ordinary standing should do it in the garden. A rare old Japanese manuscript, devoted to a consideration of the various matters connected with the ceremony, states that when Asano Takumi no Kami, the lord of the Forty-seven Ronins, committed *hara-kiri*, it was in the palace of a daimyo named Tamura, and the affair was so sudden that the garden was covered with matting, with thick mats and

a carpet laid on the top. It was complained that it was not right to treat a daimyo in this way. It was remarked, however, that in the old times it was customary for the ceremony to come off on a leather carpet spread in the garden, and the author observes that it is wrong for persons acquainted with only one form to accuse Tamura of improper conduct. But he says, if the object was to prevent the pollution of the house by blood, the accusation was justifiable. If a man has made a place expressly for the ceremony lest his house be soiled by blood, he will be blamed for so doing, says our authority. "For it certainly cannot disgrace the house of a warrior when he has been ordered to take charge of a Samurai condemned to perform *hara-kiri*," he observes, and he calls it absolutely nonsensical to regard the place as polluted where a Samurai has committed the deed. He relates that seventeen of the Forty-seven Ronins committed *hara-kiri* in the garden of a palace in the Shirokané quarter of Yedo. At the end of the ceremony the priests of the Shugenja sect were called to come and purify the place. But the lord of the house put a stop to this when he heard what his people had done, and he ordered the spot to be let alone, for he held that there was no call for the purification of a place where the faithful men had put themselves to death. It is stated that in the three other palaces where the remaining Ronins were assigned, the places where they died were purified. But the Prince of Higo, whose name was Kumamoto Ko, and who was the lord of the Shirokané palace, was praised by the people for his action.

Of the execution of Asano Takumi no Kami, the author relates that he was taken to the palace of Tamura Sama at the hour of the monkey, which is from three to five o'clock in the afternoon. He then took off his ceremonial costume, took a meal consisting of a bowl of soup and five dishes, drank two cups of warm water, and committed *hara-kiri* at the hour of the cock, which is between five o'clock and seven in the evening. It is observed that, while *hara-kiri* cannot properly be called an execution, the only difference between it and an ordinary execution is that it does not affect the honor of a Samurai. Of the ceremonies at the death of the seventeen Ronins of Asano Takumi no Kami at the

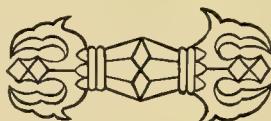


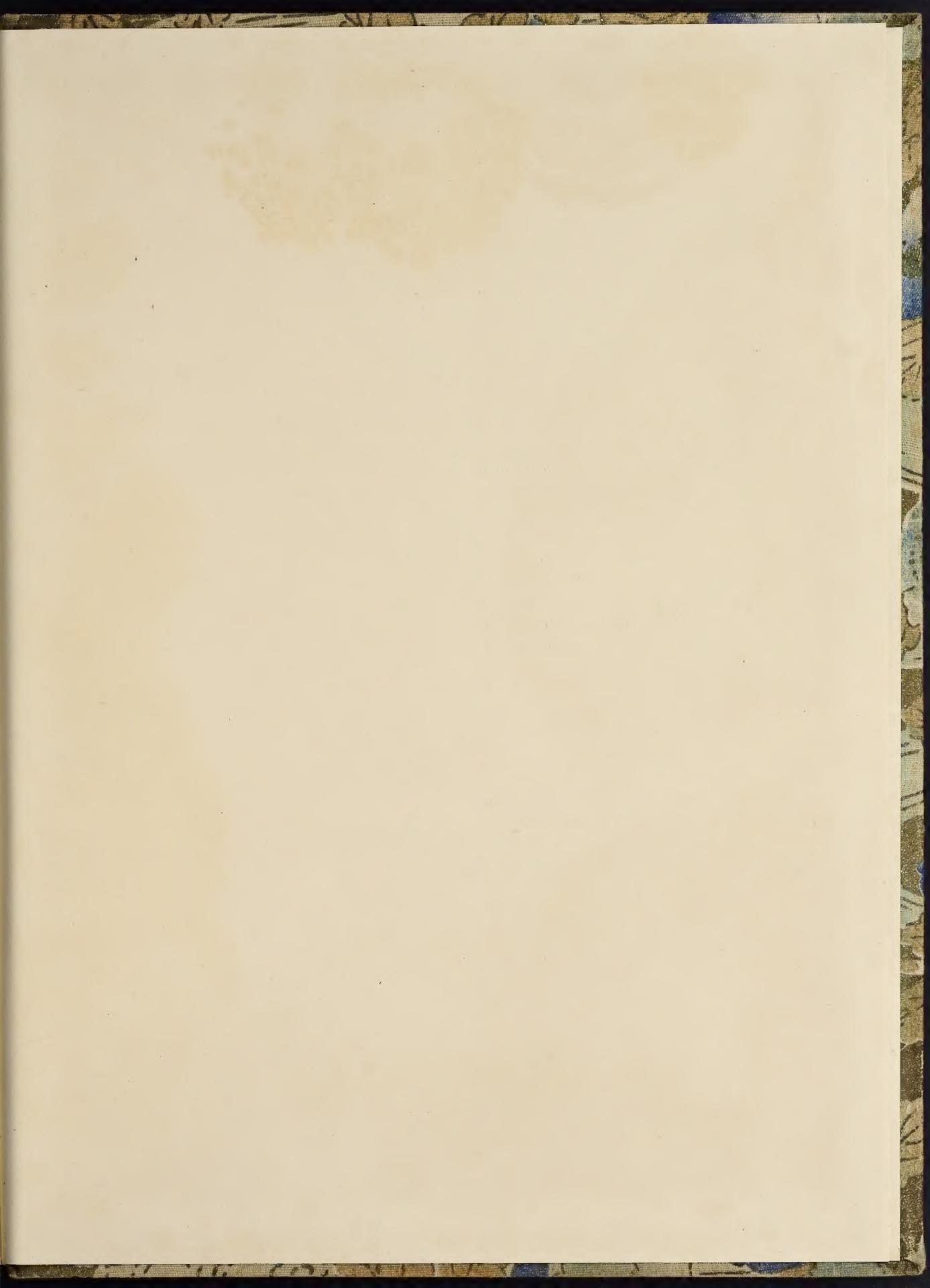
PLAYING HOP SCOTCH.

The sports of Japanese children include kite flying, top-spinning, snow-balling, battledore and shuttlecock, etc., in fact most of our old nursery friends modified by the *genius loci*.

palace of the Prince of Higo it is related that a curtain was hung around the garden before the reception room; then upon three mats a white cloth was spread. The Ronins were brought from the reception room one by one, accompanied by two men, one on each side, and the second followed. When the execution was over, the body of the dead man was hidden from the chief witness by a white screen; it was then wrapped in white cloth and carried to the rear by two foot-soldiers to be placed in a coffin. Then sand was sprinkled where the ground was covered with blood, and it was swept clean. Fresh mats were laid, and the place was made ready for the next execution.

It is regarded as important that persons condemned to commit *hara-kiri* should receive from those in charge of them the most considerate treatment possible. Every kindness and courtesy that can be shown should be observed, and the treatment of the seventeen Ronins by the Prince of Higo is instanced as an example, the prince having had paper and writing materials sent to their room after sentence had been passed. It is related that when the Forty-seven Ronins had been sentenced in the palace of Matsudaira Oki no Kami, that nobleman himself went to take leave of them. The heroic boy, Oishi Chikara, was separated from his father, who was numbered with the seventeen given in charge to the Prince of Higo. Matsudaira Oki no Kami called the boy to him and asked him if he had any message for his mother, who, he heard, was at home in their own country; he would send any message without delay. Chikara stood for a while with head bent down; then drawing back a little and lifting his head he thanked the daimyo for his kindness. He said that his father had from the first impressed upon him that their crime was so grave that even should they be pardoned upon one count there would be left a hundred million counts for their condemnation, and if he disregarded what he said his hatred would follow him beyond the grave. His father had told him this at the Sengakuji Temple, and once more when they were separated, Chikara to be taken to the palace of Prince Sengoku. He and his father had been condemned to death by *hara-kiri*, according to their hearts' desire. But he could not forget his mother, and he said: "When we parted at Kyoto she told me that our parting would be long; she told me not to be a coward when I thought of her. Since I then left her for long, I now have no message to send her." The boy's heroic words brought tears to the eyes of Oki no Kami and all his retainers.





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